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Up The Mazaruni For Diamonds

William J. LaVarre

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UP THE MAZARUNI FOR DIAMONDS

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UP THE MAZARUNI FOR DIAMONDS

BY

WILLIAM J. LAVARRE
VETERAN SCOUT

BOSTON
MARSHALL JONES COMPANY
1919

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To
My Mother and Father

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LAVARRE is adventuring in the right spirit. His diamond hunting is instructive as well as interesting. He has brought back from the field information which will help others who intend to traverse similar trails.

Though younger than most explorers he has carefully endeavored to prepare himself for the field by study and travel. He believes in the theory of hard work and preparedness, the essentials of the successful explorer.

In these days when there is so much endeavor which seems to be for the acclaim of the crowds and the deification of self, it is refreshing to meet one who seems to be in it for the love of the work and the good which he may open up for others in the field of exploration.

William J. LaVarre was born in Richmond, Va., August 4, 1898. His love for the outdoors was demonstrated early for he camped in the open at the age of ten and as a boy scout a few years later won a contest for

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leadership of the Honor Patrol of the New York City organization of the Boy Scouts of America. He also won sixteen merit badges in the same scout order. He was one of twenty-four scouts chosen from the East to build a trail in Maine for the Forestry Department of the United States in 1914.

He has specialized in Geology and Mineralogy and shown considerable skill in the use of the camera. He is now in the field as scientific assistant and photographer of the Rice Amazon Expedition. His diamond hunting trip was a success.

We look forward to his return from the Amazon with an interesting experience and a successful exploration.

ANTHONY FIALA

AUGUST 11, 1919.

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UP THE MAZARUNI FOR DIAMONDS

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UP THE MAZARUNI FOR DIAMONDS

CHAPTER I

"ARE YOU GAME TO TRY IT?"

HERE'S a queer looking letter," I said to myself one day early in the spring of 1917. I could hardly make out the postmark. It was something of a surprise to receive a letter from British Guiana, as I finally deciphered it, but the contents were even more surprising.

The letter was from my friend Dudley P. Lewis.

"I need a partner in a diamond mining venture," he wrote. "Are you game to try it out with me? It will be a long trip full of adventures and dangers, but there are diamonds here to be had for the digging."

He wrote much more. I became enthusiastic on the moment and was determined to go if possible. I had little trouble in arranging this and wrote him that I would come.

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On the tenth of May I sailed from New York on the steamship *Saga* to Barbados, where Lewis met me. He was delighted and quite as enthusiastic as I. He had been in Georgetown, British Guiana, for a while on other business and had learned about the diamond fields away up the famous, and treacherous, Mazaruni River.

From Barbados we sailed away to South America on the steamer *Parima*. I was surprised to find Georgetown such a large city, 60,000 inhabitants, and, as the buildings were all one and two stories, one can imagine how it spread out.

"Can we start to-morrow?" I asked, after we had reached our hotel. Lewis laughed.

"Hardly," he said. "This isn't like a trip back home where you can toss some clothes and clean collars in a bag, buy your ticket, catch your train and be off."

I had not given much thought to exactly how we were to travel. But I soon learned that to journey up a great river for hundreds of miles with a score of natives, taking all the food for a six months' stay, was a matter that could not be arranged in a moment.

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The starting out place for the trip was twenty miles from Georgetown at a town up-river called Bartica. But as Bartica has only twenty inhabitants we bought everything in Georgetown. There we busied ourselves with the preparations. It seemed as though there were a million details to look after, and I got an idea of what an explorer is up against, as we had to outfit ourselves about the same as an exploring party would.

"We must get lead guns, beads, mirrors and other trinkets," said Lewis.

"What's the big idea?" I asked. "Are we to open a five and ten cent store for the native Indians up there?"

"Not exactly," laughed Lewis, "but we must have something to trade with. What use is a silver or gold coin to a native back hundreds of miles in the jungle? He'd rather have a twenty-five cent kitchen knife than a fifty dollar gold piece."

The "lead guns" are not lead, as I learned, but the very cheapest sort of cheap guns, manufactured in England solely for trading with semi-civilized and uncivilized people. No live American boy would take one as a

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gift, but I found that the natives treasured them above everything else they possessed.

We were fortunate in finding a Dutch captain, a man who has navigated the turbulent waters of the Mazaruni for twenty years. And he picked out a skilled "bowman," a native who stands at the bow of your boat, with an immense paddle, and fends it off rocks, gives steering directions and acts generally as a sort of life preserver for the boat.

Then there was "Jimmy." He was a negro, rather undersized and as black as the inside of a lump of coal. He appointed himself our special guardian, a sort of valet, overseer and servant. He looked after our personal belongings, cooked our food, made our tea and devoted himself exclusively to us.

Twenty paddlemen were also engaged. Sixteen of them were quite as black as our Jimmy, and four of them were in varying shades from tobacco brown to light molasses candy tint. These latter were of mixed Dutch and Negro blood.

"They are 'Bovianders,' " said the captain.

"Queer tribal name," I commented.

The captain laughed. "Not exactly a

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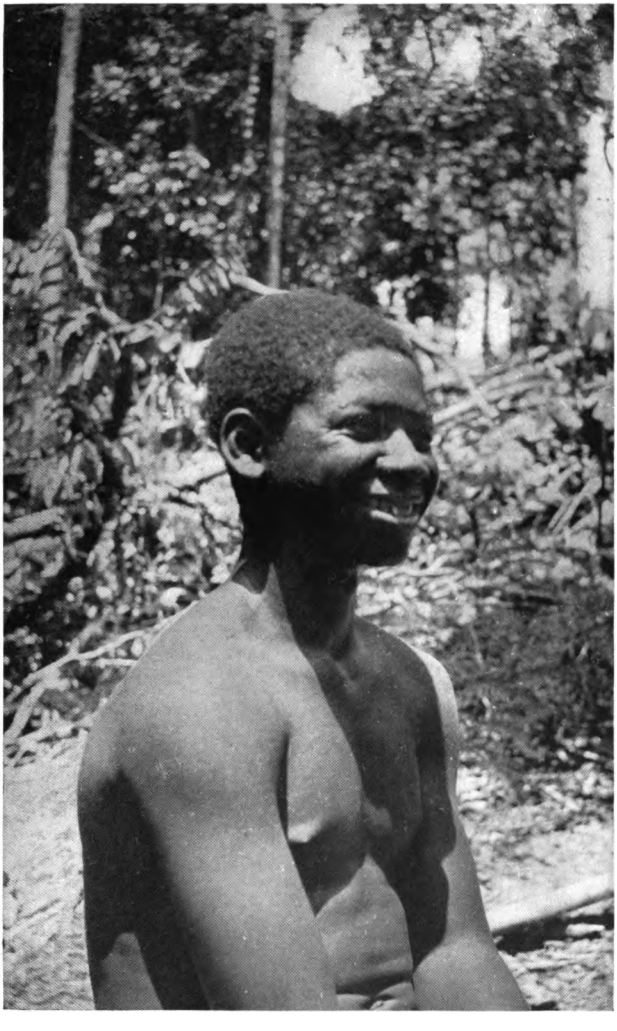

"JIMMY"

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tribal name," he explained. "They live up the river quite a distance and so it is said that they come from 'above yonder.' They have twisted that into 'Boviander,' so that the word always means people who live up the river."

While we were engaging our staff the captain was getting boats for us. He selected a great fifty-foot boat seemingly as heavy as a locomotive. It looked like a crude craft, made of great thick planks. I soon learned the necessity of such a heavy boat. We also had a small boat for emergency and for little side trips here and there.

Next came the "eats." We had to take enough food for ourselves, our twenty-two helpers and partly enough for the native Indians that we were to employ later. When the big boat was finally loaded properly under the skillful direction of the captain, we had five tons of food aboard and this included no meat at all except salt fish. There was no need to take meat, for game and fresh fish were so plentiful that we were never without them.

There was a queer, tent-shaped rig amid-

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ships of our big craft. Beneath this was room enough for us to stay sheltered during the heat of the day. White men can seldom stand the midday heat in British Guiana.

Packed all about us was the food. Jimmy climbed to the top of the pile. The captain took his position aft. The sturdy Boviander bowman took his place at the bow with his immense paddle, the twenty paddle men took their places in four groups of five, one group on each side, forward and aft of the cargo.

Then they shoved off and began their peculiar, noisy paddling.

The little town of Bartica fell away behind us as we slid out into the broad expanse of the old Mazaruni.

We were off at last, on our great diamond mining adventure!

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CHAPTER II

"IN THE LAND O' MAZARUNI"

EAGERLY I scanned the waters and either shore, determined that nothing should escape me, that I should see everything and enjoy all that there was to be enjoyed.

The captain sat, complacently smoking, at the stern of the boat, the great steering paddle, tied to the stern with thongs, in his hands. He looked as bored as if crossing the street to buy an evening paper. How could he, when there was such glorious adventure, I wondered. But afterwards I realized that twenty years of navigating the river had somewhat dulled the novelty of it for him. With him it was work, and nothing more.

To a boy used to paddling our own style of light canoes, the paddling methods of those black men seemed the most awkward in the

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world. Yet they "got there," and I doubt if any crew of white men, without years of practice, could have propelled the heavy craft as easily as they. Their method was to bend forward, holding the paddle horizontally and sliding it along the gunwale with a loud scraping noise, then suddenly lean over sidewise and dig the paddle viciously into the water, giving a sturdy backward tug with it, still scraping the paddle against the gunwales. At the end of this stroke they returned the paddle to the horizontal position with a loud thumping noise, sat up straight, then leaned forward and repeated the stroke.

They kept perfect time. No varsity crew boys ever worked in unison at the oars any better, and they were forever singing. It didn't matter whether they were paddling twenty feet across a narrow inlet or making an all day pull upstream, they always had music with their paddling.

They were crude songs, partly English that was scarcely understandable, partly native dialect and partly something else that may have been handed down to them from their ancestors who were captured in Africa so

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many generations ago and brought over by the early Dutch and English slave traders.

If the water was smooth and open, with no current, our twenty paddle men would sing as softly as the whispering of a summer breeze. But if there was a current they would sing louder. And the more difficult the paddling, the louder they would sing. In boiling rapids where it took every ounce of their strength and they had to take quick, short strokes to keep going, their voices arose to an almost howling crescendo.

Soon Bartica was lost to view around a point of land. For nearly six months we were to see no more civilization than Indian villages here and there, hidden far back from the river bank. As we swung up into the broad river where the current became strong enough to cause the paddlers to use a little extra "elbow grease" they broke into a queer song which I heard so many times after that, that it still rings in my ears. I cannot translate it. I do not know what it means, but imagine that it is some sort of love song to some dusky "Lena." This is the way it sounds:

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"San, Lena, chile, I do love yo';
Me know so, hear so, yes!
Le, le, le, le, le, le,
Blow, ma booly boy, blow! Califo 'ge 'ole!
Splenty o'gol's for A've been tol'
I' th' lan' o' Mazaruni!"

We came in sight of another boat. On the Mazaruni every boat one sees that is going in the same direction is an "adversary" and every paddler believes that it is his duty to pass it. Then you see some fancy paddle strokes, so weird and unusual and grotesque that they are difficult to describe. One would think that they were trying more to awe each other with their paddle gesticulations than with speed. How they race upstream, each determined to get and keep the lead! The captain told me that many lives were lost at rapids because the racing paddlers would give thought only to getting into the narrow passes first and were frequently crashed upon the rocks and overturned.

Not far from the little town is Kalacoon, the biological station where at various times Professor Beebe and the other scientists take up their intimate studies of tropical life.

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This station is on a high hill where the Mazaruni and Essequibo Rivers join. It was at this place that Colonel Roosevelt stopped when he visited the colony.

From this point the vegetation on both sides of the river became so dense that it seemed almost like greenish-black solid walls. No huts or signs of human life were visible at first. But finally, with sharp eyes, we got so we could detect a slight opening, a log landing at the water's edge or a faint suggestion of a thatched hut in back of the shore row of trees.

It would have been fearfully monotonous but for the fact that Lewis and I devised a new sort of game—to see which one could detect the greater number of signs of human habitation. Our natives, with sharper eyes, would verify our discoveries. All this was in the Boviander section, where the natives come down from " 'Bove yonder." Just before nightfall we reached the foot of the first falls and landed to make camp for the night.

Before the big boat touched land Lewis and I had leaped ashore to stretch our legs. The blacks jumped out into the shoal water and

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swung the boat into place and made it fast. Jimmy began taking ashore our shelters. Suddenly he began a frantic search and in despair cried:

"No cookum!"

"You bet you 'cookum,'" I shouted, "I'm starved."

"No cookum! No cookum!" repeated the distracted boy, mournfully.

Lewis investigated and came back with a long face.

"We did a bright thing," he muttered.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Left all of our cooking outfit down at the village!"

"There's two things to do, go without them or go back and get them," I suggested.

"Can't go without 'em," said Lewis.

"Then there's one thing to do," I laughed. I was not to be filled with gloom. The prospects of a great adventure were far too joyous. Our landing was at the last settlement of the Bovianders. These half Dutch, half Negro natives speak fairly understandable English. I scouted around amongst them, found a good canoe, took three black men and

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set out downriver. The two paddlers were sturdy boys and, going down with the current, they fairly made that old canoe whizz.

It was midnight when we got back to the village. Everyone was asleep except the dogs. They greeted us with howls, and many of the men turned out. Perhaps they thought they were to be attacked by some savage tribe. But we soon explained, got our cooking outfit, lashed it carefully to the canoe and started back.

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CHAPTER III

A FIRE BOAT AND A NATIVE WEDDING

THERE was no speeding up against the current, although the light canoe made better progress than our heavy boats. And then I heard a sound that made me think I was back home. It was the "put—put—put" of a gasoline motor. I was amazed.

"Fire boat," grunted one of the black men.

I hailed it. A Dutchman answered and came over to us. It was an ordinary native boat to which he had attached one of those portable motors which may be put on any boat. He was going upstream and gladly took us in tow, much to my delight. Otherwise I would not have reached camp until daylight, and the tropical nights (as I afterward learned) are not the sort of nights for anyone, especially a white man, to be out in,

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because of the terrible dampness and mists as well as insect pests.

As we chugged along upriver, my three blacks sitting back and grinning at their luck because they would be paid just the same for the trip although they escaped all of the hard work, there suddenly came across the black water the most weird sounds imaginable.

There were shrieks and falsetto laughter, squeaks and tinkles and shrill pipings and heavy stamping. I couldn't imagine what it all meant.

"Wedding celebration," said the Dutchman. "Let's put in and see the fun."

I stared at the black bank of the river whence came the weird sounds, but could see nothing. Finally, as my eyes became accustomed, I caught faint glimmers of light that seemed far inland, miles and miles, I thought. In reality the natives were no more than a quarter of a mile inland, or perhaps less. We found a landing place and, guided by the fearful din and the flickering lights, made our way through the jungle to the higher, dry ground beyond. I had all sorts of visions of great snakes dropping on me and wild jungle

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beasts grabbing at my heels, but nothing worse than giant mosquitoes came near.

We came to the opening and a group of huts. In front of one hut was an improvised porch or platform. The boards were rough, uneven and loosely laid across supports. At one end sat a wrinkled and grizzled old man playing a squeaky fiddle. Beside him squatted two younger natives playing flutes. Another pounded upon the platform with a cocoanut shell, beating time.

We were welcomed with nods and smiles, but the natives could not pause in their festival to do more. They were dancing on that platform. Overalls and frayed shirts and rough brogans made up the evening dress of most of the Bovianders, but the women were decked out in gaudy skirts and waists. Up and down and back and forth over the boards, pouncing and scraping and stamping their feet, they danced and laughed.

Tallow candles, oil lanterns and here and there kerosene lamps were affixed to hut poles or trees, and by this light the dancers cast amazing shadows over everything, shadows

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that moved and swayed and intertwined in a most awesome manner.

And everyone was talking and laughing at the same time. Every fourth word was understandable but there were many dialects and vernaculars. There were cocoanuts to eat and a peculiar sort of cake or bread. We watched the merrymaking for quite a while. The newly weds were cheered by means of peculiar calls when they danced together. I suppose those brown children of the jungle danced all night. We finally grew weary of it all and set out for camp.

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CHAPTER IV

JUNGLE DAYS BEGIN

SUCH food as could be eaten without cooking had been served and everyone was asleep except Jimmy, who awaited my coming, and tumbled me into a hammock beneath a canvas shelter. I suppose I had slept many hours but it seemed no more than five minutes before I was awakened and crawled out for breakfast. The camp kitchen had been set up, the blacks had already eaten and were getting the boats ready. Our breakfast consisted of boiled rice, salt fish and biscuits.

The second day up the river was uneventful. There were broad sweeps of water, grand, wide curves and the seemingly endless mile after mile of thick jungle vegetation growing down to the water's edge. That night I had an opportunity to see how such an outfit was handled. We landed in a rather likely

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spot, not far back from the shore, at five o'clock. Some of the blacks brought the kitchen outfit ashore, others cut long poles and put up the canvas shelters. It seems that we took our "hotel" along with us, merely a great canvas cover, and spread it anew at each night's camp.

A great pole was placed in the crotch of two trees, about twelve feet above ground, the canvas stretched across this and propped up with shorter poles and ropes. Beneath this were stretched two hammocks, one for Lewis and one for myself. Meanwhile Captain Peter and the bowman swung their hammocks under the awning of the large boat.

Our twenty paddlers put up three smaller shelters beneath which they swung their own hammocks.

The tropic sun was turning the great Mazaruni to a sheet of molten gold, deep blue dusk was falling, this turning to gray, and then the camp fires began to glimmer here and there.

The captain and bowman needed no camp fire, sleeping on the boat, but we had our own, and the natives had their own at each shelter. Jimmy presided over our fire, made

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coffee for us and prepared our supper. Captain Pete and the bowman had charge of the food for the natives. The English laws outline clearly to the last ounce and gramme, just how much food you must give the natives who work for you, to live on.

It was interesting to watch Captain Peter, assisted by the bowman, with their scales, measuring out the rations to our paddlers. The Government standard of weekly rations for each man is: flour, 7 pints; salt fish, 1 pound; sugar, 1 pound; rice, three and one-fourth pints; salt pork, 1 pound; dried peas, one and three-quarters pints; biscuits, 1 pound. Frequently the men prefer the extra portion of sugar in place of the peas, as the sugar is a delicacy with them, desired above all else.

Captain Peter, through long years of experience, knew just how to divide this weekly allowance into daily portions and the blacks trusted him. In line they would march down to the boat, each with a tin plate, and receive his portion, carefully weighed on the scales, then he would march back to his camp fire and prepare his food as best suited himself.

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A JUNGLE "HOTEL"

WE WORKED STEADILY UP
THE DANGEROUS RIVER

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At the same time each one was given extra tea, sugar and crackers for the light morning meal, to save time in breaking camp. With their pint of flour they baked a cake beside the fire, using the salt from their fish for the seasoning. Sometimes boiled plantains were eaten with their supper but these they brought with them as they are not required by the Governmental regulations to be furnished them. These plantains are much like bananas, but smaller and really considerably different in taste. Then there was game and fish to supply additional meat so that, with the foodstuffs we brought along, everyone fared quite well.

As soon as they had eaten and had cleaned their tin plates they crawled into their hammocks and filled their short black clay pipes with tobacco. I must say that it was not a very attractive brand of tobacco, to judge from the odor. That night we gave cigarettes to those who did not have them and after that we sold them cigarette tobacco and papers from our stock at cost. They are extremely fond of them.

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CHAPTER V

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE NATIVES

IT was at these times, as I soon learned, that there was much amusement to be had with these blacks. I learned of their many superstitions, their ambitions, likes and dislikes and much of the customs of that wild country that could never be learned in any other manner. This I learned both by means of questions and by listening carefully as they talked to each other. Their English was about as easy to understand as that of the Southern Georgia darkey, when they cared to talk it.

A "Dodo" they told me—and they believed it, too—is a sort of hairy bird-beast twenty feet high which either eats men alive or carries them off to its jungle nest and makes slaves of them. Then they would name this

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or that acquaintance and say, "Ah spec' he shuah was et by a Dodo, yes suh."

Caven, one of our paddlers, solemnly assured me that he had seen a Dodo. Caven looked much like a Dodo, or some sort of missing link, himself. He said he was out hunting monkeys and saw one.

"He gi' me scar' fo' true," said Caven, and he must have seen some weird thing, or dreamed that he did, for his teeth chattered even at the telling of it. These blacks could talk fairly understandable English when it was necessary for them to make themselves clear to us. Otherwise they could profess almost absolute ignorance of the language, and among themselves they frequently talked a jargon that would defy any linguist to interpret.

Our men soon formed themselves into cliques and they stuck to these groupings throughout the long trip. The Bovianders kept by themselves; the Berbicans (negroes from Berbice) by themselves; and the Demerarians (who believed themselves to be the salt of the earth) likewise flocked together. We had one Barbadian negro. Now to a

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British Guiana darkey, a darkey from Barbados—one of the Leeward Islands—is the essence of laziness and good-for-nothingness. I think the British Guiana darkey is right. I found that Caven and his brother Berbicans were really the best of the lot. In every test of strength, bravery, skill and endurance, they led the other blacks.

I really did not get my initiation into the mysteries of hammock sleeping in the tropics until the second night because on the first night I tumbled in about three in the morning too tired to know whether I was in a hammock or a feather bed. But on this second night I found myself doubled up like a crescent moon. I twisted and squirmed and wriggled about in my fantastic debut into the brotherhood of hammock sleepers before I discovered that the trick was simple enough, once you got on to it, that of sleeping diagonally across it from head to foot.

Having made this discovery I arose and got out the victrola we bought in Georgetown. It was a small, cheap one, but the best investment I ever made. I don't know what induced me to do this, but with a large assort-

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ment of records that machine drove away gloom and dull care through many and many a dreary evening.

The blacks enjoyed it immensely, and it seemed strange to be mingling the voices of our opera singers with the screech of monkeys and the howls of red baboons and piping of strange night birds in the tropical jungle.

The camp fire died low, at last. Fresh lanterns were lighted and the men prepared for sleep. This was no simple matter to them. To me it was the most astonishing sight I had witnessed. They made ready for bed by putting on all of the clothing they possessed. Then they wrapped cloths around their hands, feet and necks. Some even pulled bags down over their heads and tied them. The "wealthy" blacks had bags for each foot. Our empty flour bags became grand prizes to be used for this purpose, which we awarded to the best workers.

By the faint camp fire light and flicker of lanterns those natives certainly did look queer, like fantastic goblins, all muffled up. There was little that seemed human about them as they clambered into their hammocks

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and rolled themselves up, pulling over the flaps until quite lost to view.

"Does it get so cold at night that we have to wrap up like that?" I asked Jimmy.

"No suh, dey's feered o' vampire bats. That there is a *part* protection."

I couldn't get the "part protection" meaning of it, and all Jimmy would explain was that they had some sort of superstitious "voodoo" rigmarole performances to keep away the vampires.

I was quite excited about it. From early boyhood I had read about the deadly vampire bats that come upon you when you are sleeping and suck your life blood away. Secretly I hoped that I would be bitten by one so that I could boast of it when I got back home.

The blacks were asleep. By virtue of being a sort of aide-de-camp Jimmy was allowed to swing his hammock in a corner of our shelter. He insisted that the lantern be kept burning all night.

"No need of it," I told him.

"Yes suh, they is, Mister Laver," (which was the best he could do in the way of pronouncing my name). "Ef yo' don' bu'n a

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lantum all night yo' will shuah be annoyed."

"Annoyed?" I laughed.

"Uh, huh, annoyed by vampires," he answered, very solemnly.

But I couldn't sleep with the lantern light in my eyes and so blew out the light. Several times in the night, poor scared Jimmy tried to light it, but I yelled at him.

Neither Lewis nor myself was ever bitten by a vampire. Sometimes one would alight on my hammock, but fly away without trying to bite me. Yet, despite their great care, our blacks were frequently bitten. They would become restless in the night, kick off some of their wrappings and then the vampires would get at them.

I have heard that vampires are deadly. I never knew personally of a fatal case. I do know that they always pick out a blood vessel for their biting spot and that they never awaken the sleeper. The more blood they draw, the sounder is the sleep of the victim and the bite does not become painful until the next day.

I should say that our crew of blacks must have lost, among them, a couple of quarts of

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blood during the trip. Some of them were quite lame and sore and a bit weakened as a result, but that was all. As near as I can figure it out the vampires prefer the blood from gentlemen of color rather than from pale-faced Americans.

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CHAPTER VI

LIFE ON THE RIVER

"DAYLIGHT! Daylight!" It was the stentorian shout of Captain Peter. He was a human alarm clock. He never failed to awaken at the first gleam of daylight. In the tropics it does not come on with a slow pink dawn as here, but seems to burst through the gray morning sky in a flash.

There was a scramble everywhere and all tumbled out of the hammocks. Camp fires were lighted, tea was boiling and in a short time everyone was getting into the boat. The natives had our shelters down while we were drinking tea. They came down to the boat with their pots and pans jangling at their sides, and at the captain's cry, "In boats all!" we climbed in, the darkies took up their paddles and began their noisy paddling, singing at the same time. The sun was flaming over

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the top of the jungle from the distant shore of the river, three quarters of a mile away, and we set out on our journey.

Lewis and I took seats on top of the canvas where we could see everything. We passed through a wide part of the river full of islands and deep channels and treacherous currents and whirlpools. Only a skillful man like Captain Peter could have guided our boat through the right channels, as some of them contain whirlpools that look smooth enough on the surface but would have dragged even as heavy a craft as our own under without a struggle.

Some of the islands were a mile in area, some no bigger than a doormat. In and out amongst them we paddled and finally came to a smoother, more open part of the river.

"Eleven o'clock!" cried Captain Peter.

I looked at my watch. It was just eleven o'clock.

"Your watch is right, Captain," I called.

"I have no watch, sir," he replied. "I use God's time."

It was a fact, he told time by the sun, and seldom was a minute out of the way.

Eleven o'clock was always breakfast time.

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How those black men could paddle up against a strong current towing our smaller boat, from five o'clock to eleven with only a cup of tea was more than I could understand. Yet they did it, and worked well and never seemed hungry. At eleven we always went ashore and cooked breakfast, cakes, rice, boiled plantains, salt fish and tea. Then we would pile back into the boat again and keep on until just before sunset, trying to make a good landing in time to pitch camp before dark.

That long afternoon was tiresome to me. I scanned the deep foliage everywhere in hopes to see many wild beasts and reptiles. I recalled my school geography, with its woodcuts of jungles showing great alligators on the shores, giant boa constrictors writhing in trees, monkeys hopping from branch to branch and queer, bright-colored birds flitting about. This was jungle, surely enough, with such thick vegetation that only crawling things could penetrate it, yet for hours I saw no signs of life there. There were wonderful orchids that would, if they could be brought to New York, sell for fabulous sums. There

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were queer looking trees, great fronded palms, hanging moss as thick as large hawsers and other growing things that I knew nothing about.

In Georgetown I had heard tales of giant forty-foot snakes. I never saw one. I did catch a glimpse of a small snake which they told me was deadly poison. He was hanging from a limb over the water. We were paddling close inshore to avoid a current. One of the blacks saw it and in a flash knocked it far away into the stream with a blow of his paddle and kept on paddling, because to him this was a common incident. His eyes were trained to see such things.

That night we camped at Topeka Falls, or just below them, and the roar lulled me to sleep.

I discovered that the first part of our trip upriver was not as full of adventures as I had hoped. But adventure came in good time. The routine was the same, night after night, but there were many new things of interest to see, many narrow escapes and considerable trouble in one way and another. At this

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camping place I stripped and was about to take a swim.

"Hey, quit that," shouted Lewis.

"I won't hurt your old river," I laughed.

"You won't come out alive, sir," said the captain.

"There isn't an alligator or crocodile or whatever you call 'em in sight," I insisted and started to dive. Jimmy restrained me.

"No go in. Fish eatum up," he said.

I laughed at the idea of a fish eating me up. The captain tossed a salt fish into the water. There was a swish and a big fish came and grabbed it. I didn't get a very clear look at the fish but he looked bigger than a whale and his teeth seemed altogether too prominent for me to fool with.

I discovered that the river was full of "perai," a decidedly savage fish extremely fond of human beings. One of them will devour a man in a short while.

I gave up my plan of having a swim and Lewis and I satisfied ourselves by sitting on the edge of the small boat and splashing water over each other.

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CHAPTER VII

MUTINY AMONG THE CREW

OUR fifth night was Saturday. We did not intend to travel or work on Sunday. We selected a splendid camp site. Heretofore the blacks had waited and given us the best camping place. But we had been treating them so well that they thought our kindness to them was not kindness at all, but fear of them. And so they started to make *their* shelter on the best spot.

"You can't have that place," I said.

"We got it," grinned one of the men. Most of the others stuck by him. One or two slunk off.

"Go down there," I commanded.

"We stay here," he declared and stood his ground.

I was in an uncomfortable position. If I let them have their way this time there would be no living with them. If I got in a fight —

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they were, after all, twenty-two blacks to three whites — they could overpower us.

Suddenly I had a vision of how they would abuse us if I gave in. I could see them grinning at each other, believing that we were afraid of them. That situation would be unbearable. I turned on the black man and pointed with my left hand down the slope.

"Get down there and stay down!" I commanded.

"I won't — "

He didn't say any more. My fist shot out and took him under the ear and he went over like a stick of wood. Then I wheeled to face the others.

I really expected a fight, but the blacks stared at their fallen companion who rolled down the slope, their eyes bulging, and before I had time to bark out a short command for them to get out, they hastily snatched up their belongings and ran down the hill.

I stood there a moment, waiting to let my anger cool off a little to make sure that I would not say things or do things unnecessarily severe or that I would regret. Then I strode down to where they were grouped and

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where the first black was dazedly rubbing his chin. When they saw me approach they again dropped their things and started to run away.

"Don't run. You are all right there," I shouted. They paused and looked at me suspiciously.

"We are running this little outfit," I said to them, pointing to Lewis, "and we are hiring you to work for us. You know your places. Keep them and you will get good treatment, otherwise you will be the sorriest niggers in British Guiana. For every wrong that you do, you shall be punished. For every good thing that you do you shall be rewarded. We are treating you kindly because it is the right thing to do, not because we are afraid of you. Your punishment for attempting to dispute our authority shall be to sleep to-night without your shelter cloth!"

Then I picked up their shelter cloth, turned my back on them and walked away. To be quite truthful, I was not a little frightened when I turned my back, fearing treachery, yet it was the only thing to do. I knew that I had to make them believe that I was without

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fear of them or of anything else, otherwise I would not win their respect or co-operation.

Meekly they arranged to hang their hammocks without the shelter cloth, seeming to take it for granted that they had this penalty coming to them for the way they had acted.

"You acted like a veteran explorer," said old Captain Peter to me. "You did just right, boy. If you had given in they would not have worked, they would have stolen everything and they would have abused you during all the trip."

Most of the white men that these native darkies knew had been of a rough sort, adventurous Dutchmen and others, who kicked them about and treated them without the least regard until the poor black boys — we call all blacks "boys" — thought that it was the white man's natural way. When we showed kindness to them and full regard for their comfort they mistook it for fear. And, thinking that we were afraid of them, they decided to run things themselves. It did not take them long to learn that American white men are not brutes and that when they worked hard and acted on the square they

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would be treated with kindness. And I am sure no group of native blacks, as a whole, ever worked more faithfully than this bunch after they had learned their lesson. There are always a few exceptions. One or two became lazy, one or two tried to steal diamonds, later, but we had our own methods of handling them.

For the first time in my life I learned by direct experience the value of superiority of intelligence. We white men, being mentally far superior to the blacks, could rule them. Had they known their own strength they could have overpowered us at any time. And I recalled that in all of my histories the same has held good. The mentally superior people have ruled the less intelligent.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE GLORIOUS FOURTH

THIS was our fifth night of camping on the banks of the Mazaruni. We were to be two nights here, as we did not intend to travel or work on Sunday.

By the time we had our shelters erected and this little mix-up with the blacks had been settled, Lewis suddenly looked up from his notebook in which he was keeping a sort of journal, and said, "Say!"

"Say it," I remarked, lazily, from my hammock where I was resting.

"Whoop-ee!" shouted Lewis, leaping to his feet.

"What's got you?" I demanded. "Is it a vampire down your neck or a crocodile up your trousers leg?"

"This, my beloved fellow American, happens to be the fourth day of July, in the year

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of our Lord nineteen hundred and seventeen, and the one hundred and forty-first year of our country's independence!" was his reply, whereupon I stared at him a moment and then I, too, leaped up and emitted a war whoop. Fourth of July in a far-away jungle!

In the British Guiana wilds we of course couldn't do just as we would have done back in the United States, but we did the next best thing. While he was getting out some fire-arms I dug up several flags we had with us and soon the Stars and Stripes were much in evidence. We rigged a pole in the center of our camp, raised our largest flag and, with hats off, repeated the oath of allegiance. Then we ran the colors up on our boats and stuck the smaller flags about in various places.

Our next move was a bit of noise.

"Bang-bang-bang-bang!" went our repeating rifles. Then we shot our revolvers and finally we improvised a "cannon" out of a hollow log, filled it with blasting powder from our stock for mining, attached a fuse and kept up our firing of small arms until sunset, which was then but a few minutes coming.

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Lewis lighted the fuse. I stood by at the flag and began to lower it.

"WHANG!"

It certainly was some explosion. Bits of the old log flew in every direction.

Quickly I lowered the flag, for that final explosion was our "sunset gun."

There were some scared blacks in our party. They thought we had surely gone crazy. Those who had attempted to assert themselves when we landed were certain that we intended to kill them. But Captain Peter explained to them that it was our national holiday and that we were celebrating, and this made them feel better.

I ordered an especially good feast that night, some tinned fruits and double portions of food for all. Then we got out the victrola and I selected all of the old war songs and all of our patriotic music that we had, and for two hours Lewis and I made a bluff at singing everything from "Yankee Doodle" and "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean" to "America" and "The Star Spangled Banner."

It was the most unusual Fourth of July celebration I had ever experienced and, now

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that we are having sane Fourths at home, I believe we burned more gunpowder away up there in the jungles of British Guiana on the banks of the Mazaruni than was burned in half the cities at home.

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CHAPTER IX

BABOON FOR DINNER

SUNDAY we sat about camp, reading and chatting for a while. Then we heard the peculiar roaring of the wild red baboons, and the blacks wanted to go into the jungle and shoot some, as these men are extremely fond of the meat.

Off a party of us went, through the thick jungle and into the more open forests on the uplands back from shore. Again I kept my eyes open for the giant snakes I had been told about. But I saw none. Finally some of the blacks, circling ahead, came upon some of the red baboons and we heard their shots. Hurrying on to get into the fun I heard one howl close to me. Finally I made him out, high in a tree. By good luck I got him with the first shot and he came tumbling down at my feet, quite dead and one of the most

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hideous looking beasts to be found. My appetite was not whetted in the least at thought of eating him. The blacks came back with two more which they had got after a dozen or more shots. The fact that I dropped one the first shot increased their respect for me because it indicated that I was a dead shot. I did not deny it, although the truth was that I was by no means a crack marksman.

On the way back I suddenly let out a yell and tried to shake something from the back of my hand. From the feeling I was sure it was a red hot poker, jabbed quite through my hand. What I did see was a small red ant. He had hooked his biting apparatus into the skin of my hand and I had to pull him off. There must have been some sort of poison on him for sharp pains, like needles of fire, darted through my hand and up my arm. It was an hour or more before the pain went away.

Jimmy hailed our arrival with the baboons with delight and proceeded at once to dress and cook the one I had bagged. Both Lewis and myself were rather skeptical about eating any. However, we had been without our cus-

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tomary quantity of fresh meat and decided to try some.

Jimmy boiled some of it with salt pork, seasoning it well. Very gingerly Lewis and I tasted it. The meat was dark, very tender and, to our surprise, tasted much like rabbit or gray squirrel meat.

"I feel like a cannibal, eating baboon," laughed Lewis.

"Darwin said we were related to monkeys, not baboons," I argued.

"Well, a baboon belongs to the same family. I feel as though I were dining on a distant relative."

But we soon learned to overcome such feelings and the meat was really excellent. How the darkies did feast on it! There wasn't an unpicked bone or a shred of it left by the time they were finished.

Monday, our seventh day on the river, found us in the midst of some perilous rapids and facing some tough propositions in the way of portages. In the shallow waters there was no danger from the Perai, or man-eating fish, and the darkies could leap out, fasten a line at the bow and two at the stern and haul

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the craft up over ledges to still and deep water. But frequently it meant that we were to pile out and lighten the boat by removing the five tons of supplies!

Twice we had to carry those five tons of provisions and other supplies two or three hundred yards around portages while the boys hauled the heavy boat up the ledges. To make matters worse, there was a drizzling rain. After we got further up the river we had less trouble with rains because they came regularly, morning and night, without fail. We made a camp in the rain and ate beneath our shelters.

Early in the forenoon of the next day we came within sight of Caburi, the largest falls on the Mazaruni River. At this point the Puruni River joins the Mazaruni. It was a big job to unload and carry our provisions and other equipment up over the high ledges by hand, for while it was only a carry of about a hundred yards, it was difficult clambering up over steep ledges of the falls with them. It took us more than half the day just to get over the falls and load again.

I had been taking a number of pictures,

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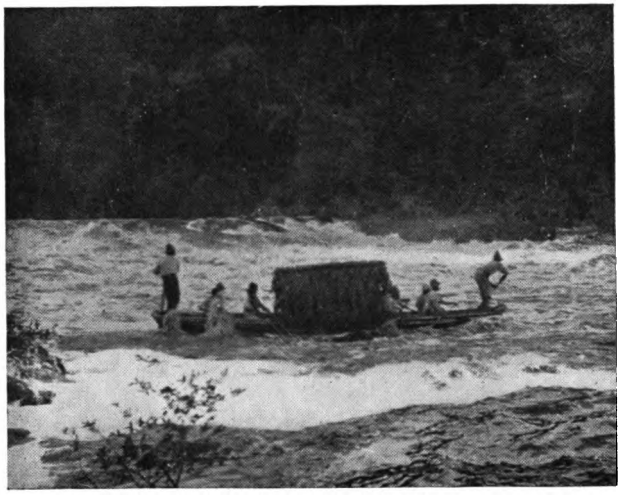

ONCE IN A WHILE A BOAT
SHOT PAST US

AT TIMES A PORTAGE MUST
BE MADE

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but I lost many of them because I did not know that the warm water of the tropics would ruin the negatives. The developing tank is excellent at home, but down there in torrid British Guiana where the water is always from 75 to 80 degrees above zero in temperature, not even the tanks would save them, the heat of the water softening and ruining the emulsion on the celluloid films. The only way I could do, as I afterwards learned, was to take the pictures and then seal the exposed films in tin boxes and wait until I got back to a cooler climate or to civilization where I could get ice to put in the fluids.

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CHAPTER X

IN THE INDIAN COUNTRY

OVER the Caburi Falls we found a broad expanse of still water, smooth and, while the current was fairly swift, by no means like the treacherous rapids below.

"Better navigating now, until almost up to the Big Bend, sir," said Captain Peter.

The "Big Bend" was a name to conjure with for Lewis and me, for away up the Mazaruni were the diamonds, where the river makes a sharp bend and begins to almost double in its tracks. This is due to the hilly formation and the lowlands between the hills.

"This is the Indian territory," added the captain, whereupon I became instantly alert, for I was anxious to see the real natives of this wild country.

Our blacks are called "Native Blacks," but

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in truth they are no more native to British Guiana than are the negroes of the United States native to North America. They all had the same ancestors, the blacks of Africa who were brought over in slave ships to be sold.

The reason the Indians live in the upper reaches of the river was plain enough, for here the water was smooth and navigable for their peculiar light dugouts and their egg-shell-like woodskins, canoes made of bark.

We had no more than swept around the first great bend in the broad expanse of still water above the falls than we saw a canoe loaded down with an Indian family and their possessions.

"Good!" exclaimed Captain. "We will get them to hunt for us and have plenty of fresh meat and good fish. I will call them."

Then he did a peculiar thing. Instead of shouting to them, and they were surely nearly half a mile away, he called in a very low tone of voice, softer by far than he would use in speaking to the bowman on our own craft.

"Yoo-hoo. Yoo-hoo," he said, over and over, a dozen times.

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"They'll never hear you. Let me show you how to shout to them," I said.

"No-no," warned the captain. "A great shout will frighten them. Their ears are so well trained to every sound of the river and jungle that they can hear almost every sound. A loud noise startles them."

"Yoo-hoo," he repeated again, in a low tone.

The Indians heard, turned their heads and studied us and then began to paddle toward us. Gradually our boats came together and I studied them eagerly. It was a strange sight to me, the first really uncivilized people I had ever seen. Before they got to us one of the men stopped paddling and called, in a low tone:

"Me-a-ree! Me-a-ree!"

"Me-a-ree!" repeated Captain Peter.

"What does that mean?" I demanded.

"It is a form of greeting, sir. It means a combination of 'How do you do?' and 'We are friends.' Always use it when you meet the native Indians."

They talked in low mutterings but the captain seemed to be able to understand them.

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Later they talked in a sort of pidgin English that I could understand fairly well myself.

At first I was a bit bashful about staring at them, thinking that they would be embarrassed or consider me rude, and that it might affect their modesty. I laugh now every time I think of that. In the first place, they do not know the meaning of the word "modesty." Not that they are immodest, but that they go about with scarcely any clothes, which seems quite all right to them. And as for embarrassing them by staring at them, they consider it an honor to be stared at, to have someone take an interest in them.

To me they were a great curiosity. The entire family was crowded in their small canoe, the old grandfather with a gray tinge to his hair although with bright eyes and strong muscles, as his paddling showed; his son, son's wife, their son, who was quite a youth; two younger boys and several babies. Then there were several tame parrots, a large blue and yellow macaw that croaked incessantly and a worried little flea-bitten dog much mauled by the babies.

And packed in about them in their none

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too safe canoe I saw a dozen chunks of smoked meat, lying about like so much firewood to be walked over, a dozen or more very stiff and black smoked fish, several baskets of queer vegetables, a bunch of small bananas, bows and arrows, blowpipes and bundles of the dangerous poisoned blowpipe arrows with tips wrapped, fish spears, game spears and a large iron pan which was originally used for washing gold, but used by this Indian family — who prized it above all their worldly goods — as a kettle, stove, frying pan and griddle.

In the center of the boat on a large piece of wet and noninflammable bark, lay a heap of glowing coals, to be used for their cooking fire wherever they might camp or upon their return to their home. From this I figured it out that matches in the jungle were not to be had for the asking.

We gave each man cigarettes, which at once made us friends. The captain began to dicker with the men about securing game for us, and as they talked I made a study of them. One thing is certain, they are not bothered by the high price of clothing. I looked at the

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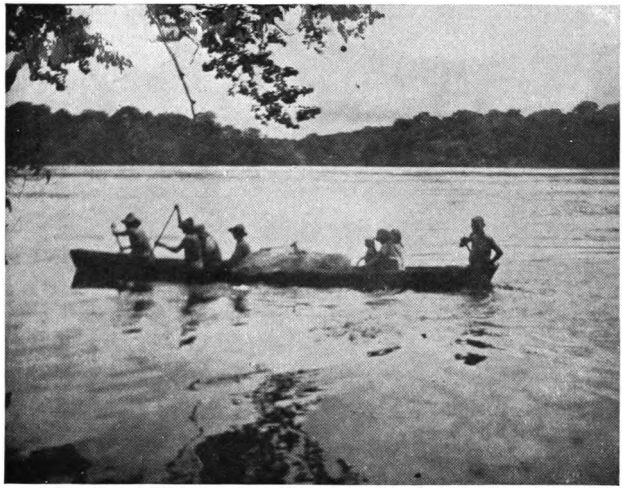
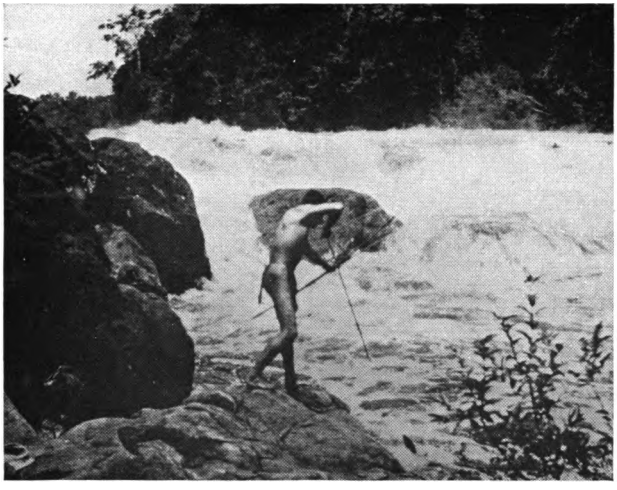


THE FIRST JUNGLE INDIANS WE SAW



AN INDIAN FISHERMAN

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big boy, he was about sixteen I should judge — about the age when I got into long trousers and had plenty of difficulties in keeping them pressed, when I worried about the right style and fit of collars and the proper tie to go with my shirt, when collar buttons and scarf pins and cuff links were important to me and I craved silk socks and kept my shoes polished and my clothes brushed. It was a serious matter in those days, as every boy knows, getting up in the morning, getting properly dressed and off to school in time. And I looked at this big boy. He wore a red loin cloth which was about a foot long, suspended from a "belt" made of some wild vine. That was all the clothing that he possessed in the world, all that he needed and I'm sure every boy will envy him his comfort, if nothing more. The men, too, wore loin cloths, red, and about two feet long, tucked into vine belts.

The women wore smaller loin cloths, called an apron or "queyu." These were decorated with beads and held on by a string of beads instead of vines. The smaller children wore nothing at all. Some of the women wear

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necklaces made of shells, animal teeth or beads or all three. Some have bright dried beans for beads and most of them wear strings of beads around their legs just below the knees.

The men seemed fairly well built. Their light, copper-colored skin was smooth and remarkably clean. Their hair was jet black and as straight as that of our own North American Indians, and their features slightly resembled those of our Indians at home, although not so strong and picturesque. Some of them, men and women, are tattooed and also decorated with "beena," done by cutting into the arm and letting the scars heel deeply in queer designs. This "beena," I learned, is believed by them to be a charm against all sorts of evil and, on the women's arms (women mostly use this "decoration"), they think that it helps them to weave hammocks and to make their everlasting cassava bread.

The parrots and the dog seemed very friendly, the birds walking over him and making queer, low, croaking sounds, the dog lazily watching them walk over him and now and then wagging his tail.

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One peculiarity about their talk, the pidgin English, was something like that of the Chinese coolies I had met in the West. They substitute the letter "l" for the letter "r" and the letter "b" for the letter "v." They say "belly good" instead of "very good."

"So," finished the captain to the head man, the grandfather, "you go hunt some game and shoot some fish for us."

"Uh huh, me go hunt um. Shoot paccu, shoot maam, anything. Bring 'long to you bime by." And the Indians then paddled off and were lost to view around the curve of the river.

"Will they do it? Will they come and find us?" I asked.

"They certainly will, sir. They want the sugar and kerosene and other things we shall trade with them for the game."

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CHAPTER XI

"UNCIVILIZED," BUT COURTEOUS, QUIET AND CLEAN

THAT night we pitched camp on the left bank of the river. While preparing supper I was investigating the forest that circled the little clearing and almost jumped out of my skin when I heard, in soft voices, either side of me, the word "Me-a-ree."

I am sure I jumped a couple of feet straight up. There, standing right beside me, were two of our Indian friends. They grinned at my fright. Such good woodsmen are they that they can come upon a person without making a sound. Their naked bronze bodies seem to blend with the forest shadows.

One of them had two paccu, the large, flat, delicious fish that they shoot with bow and arrow or sometimes spear. The other had a "maam" which is a bush turkey, not as large

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as our wild turkeys. This he shot with a blowpipe.

"Me-a-ree," I exclaimed, as soon as I caught my breath. I shuddered to think how easily they might have killed me had they been enemies. A white man hasn't a ghost of a chance with such clever natives if they want to get him, because he cannot travel in the jungle and forests down there without being heard, so keen is their hearing, while they can come right up to him, even when his eyes and ears are strained to see and hear, before he knows their presence.

"These are real uncivilized men," I thought, as I looked them over, standing there in the dim, deep forest edge, with bow and arrow and blowpipe, with the fish and bird, their naked bodies almost the color of the trees and shadows. But when I came to know them better I discovered that if uncivilized meant a rude, uncouth, ill-mannered, treacherous, dirty and disagreeable people, then these natives were civilized, for I found them to be real "nature's gentlemen," kind, courteous, quiet and clean. It was father and son who brought the game. They asked for

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powder and shot for their guns. The father was a sort of chief of their own little tribe and he and his son each owned one of those priceless "lead" guns, the cheap muzzle loaders made expressly for such people. We had plenty of powder and shot and made the exchange.

You or I could never get any game with those "lead" guns because they will not carry far, they will not shoot accurately and they frequently miss fire entirely. But the skilled Indians are able to stalk the game so quietly that they can almost poke the muzzle of the gun into the ribs of the game before they fire point blank. We entertained them with showing them our modern guns, and with showing them their faces in good mirrors and with victrola music, at which they marveled greatly and chattered excitedly about it. Then, as silently as they came, they disappeared into the forest to go to their homes before the night mists should enshroud them.

I went down to the waters edge to watch the last gleam of light, fast going, when suddenly there was the most terrific threshing about that I had ever heard.

Something gigantic, seemingly as big as a

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mountain, arose in front of me. I thought it must be a combination of crocodile and man-eating fish come out of the water to feast on me. Then I thought of something else.

"Good-night!" the thought flashed through my mind, "that nigger, Cavan, told the truth when he described the 'Dodo' as a hair-covered bird twenty feet high," and I had visions of being transformed into either a Dodo's supper or a Dodo's slave. Instinctively I threw up my arms to ward off the terrible creature, and fell backward.

The "giant" arose and sailed out across the water. It was a toucan — that funny bird with the immense bill that we have seen in our picture books and stuffed and occasionally alive in parks. His loud flapping, hoarse croaking, and the spread of his wings in the deepening twilight made him seem fully as big as Cavan's mythological "Dodo."

I laughed at myself, yet the sudden rising of a ruffed grouse in the deep forests at home will frequently startle a chap quite as badly as this, and I am sure that the poor toucan was more scared than I, for I nearly stepped on him when I approached the river bank.

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As usual we moved on up the river all the next day and camped at night. And quite as silently as they had come before, the two Indians appeared within our camp circle. This time each had a wild boar slung over his back like a knapsack. The beasts' feet were tied together with a small vine. Father and son had each killed one with a spear. They were greeted warmly by us and given cigarettes. But they did not seem to care about parting with the game. After a while, being persuaded by the clever Captain Peter, they agreed to let us have them, but first they must take them to their camp to clean them. I learned the reason afterwards.

Here was my opportunity to see the Indians in their homes, to see how they lived.

"Will it be all right to go home with them?" I asked the captain. He said that it would and so I turned to the father.

"Me walkee with you, savvy? Me go long-side your home."

"No sabbe, no sabbe," said the Indian.

"I want to walk along home with you," I said, in straight English this time. The Indian understood that well enough.

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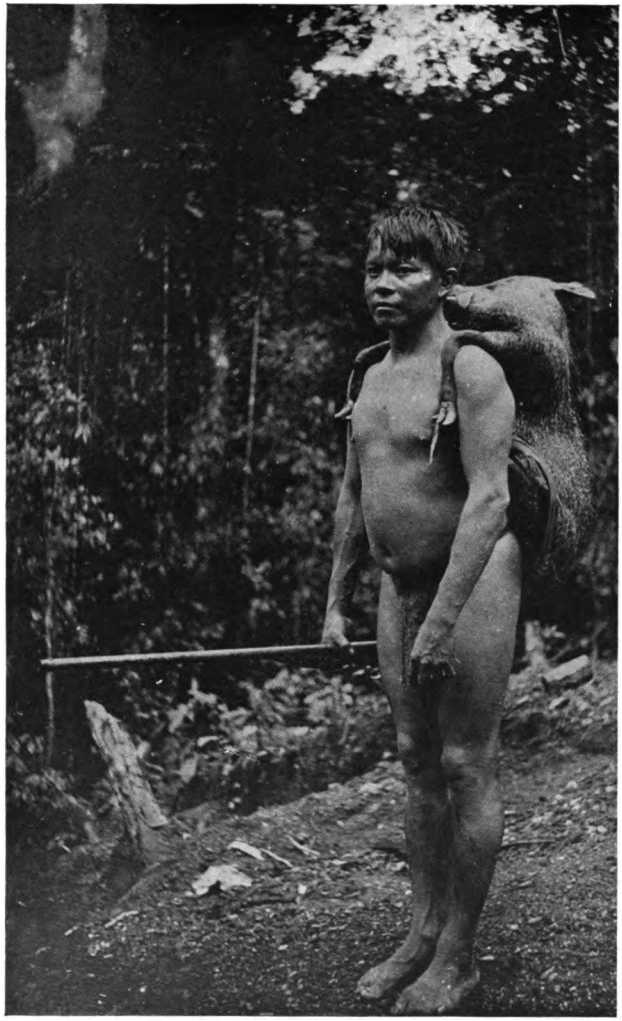

"BRINGING HOME THE BACON"

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"All li'. You come," he said.

Although he talked pidgin English, he couldn't understand it when we talked it, but he could understand straight English, except when he didn't want to answer, then he would say "No sabbe," and that settled it, you couldn't get a word from him. They were all like that.

I started out with them through the jungle forest. The silence of the place, their footsteps being almost noiseless, was depressing. I tried to talk.

"How far?" I asked.

"Me no sabbe," said the youth.

"How long will it take to get there?" I insisted.

"Little," answered his father. They have no idea of time as divided into hours and minutes, they judge by nights, before "high sun" or noon, and back to "no sun" or evening.

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CHAPTER XII

A VISIT TO A NATIVE HOME

THEIR home was not as far away as I had expected. But then, an Indian's "home" is easily made, consisting of some upright poles, roughly thatched with long marsh grass. Beneath this they place their belongings and they sleep in hammocks at night. The forests are full of little colonies or villages back from the river. They hide well back, along small streams, to secrete their camp fires from river travelers. Our friends had moved along by land as we moved by water and this night they joined some other families. There were several of the shelters and a fire burning in front of each around which members of families squatted. This camp was on a wide stream entering the Mazaruni, and screened by an island. As I entered their camp the natives jumped up from the fires. Remem-

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bering the captain's instructions I smiled at all of them and said, "Me-a-ree, Me-a-ree."

They replied with the same greeting. I handed the men presents and at once it was understood that I was a friend. Our two hunters dropped the wild boars, squatted beside them and in an amazing short time had them opened and skinned. No butcher at home with clean blocks and keen knives and meat saws ever cut up meat as quickly or as skillfully and neatly as did these men.

The women gathered about and helped them in their work. The bladders were given to two of the smaller boys, brothers of the youth. At once they ran to the water and began to float the bladders and have fun with them just as white children would do.

The intestines were carefully hung on poles by a hot fire of green twigs, to smoke. These, I was told, were to the Indians the "best part of the boar." I took their word for it, politely refusing to taste of some of the smoked intestines they already had on hand. This surprised the people who, I am sure, must have thought that I was all kinds of a fool to refuse such a wonderful treat as that.

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"Take what you want," said the old man, pointing to the dressed meat. I selected the hams, shoulders and ribs, and they nodded and walked down to the water to wash. Without a word it was understood that their work was done. The women were to do the rest, even to toting the meat to our camp. Quite a number of the Indians came back to our camp. The meat was given around to our black men, saving some of it for our own meals. Our blacks at once proceeded to build a fire of green twigs and smoke their share of the meat.

In our shelter the Indians squatted. One of the Indians who had heard our victrola pointed at it and made a circular motion with his hand, indicating that he wanted us to make the discs go around. Jimmy was delighted to play host and proceeded to go through our selection of records. The flea-bitten dog backed away and howled at certain places during the concert, but one of the parrots, which had come over perched on a child's shoulder, was deeply interested and flew to the victrola, lighted on it, eyed the revolving record sharply, squawked delight or

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anger at the music and finally hopped down on the revolving record.

He was probably the most surprised parrot in the world, for that revolving record yanked his feet out from under him and he fell squawking on his back. The way that old parrot flapped off of the victrola and back to the child's shoulder was a caution, squawking and snapping his beak as if he were swearing, in bird talk.

The Indians laughed noisily and shrilly, like children, at this.

We gave the women some little trinkets and all of them a little food. One young woman looked at my hammock and made up a funny face, jabbering to an older woman who nodded, and without a word to me she took down my hammock and began to unravel it. I decided to say nothing and watch her. When it was all unraveled and nothing but a pile of cords she began deftly to weave it again and when she was finished it was as even and smooth as any hammock ever made. She had seen an uneven place in it, knew that it would not be comfortable, and fixed it. I slept much better in it that night. I gave her

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a piece of scented soap, which delighted her. With great pride she walked around letting everyone have a smell of it. I saw her again and she had bored a hole through the cake and strung it on her necklace. I have often wondered how long it lasted. As the Indians never mind the rain but are out in it just as they are in sunshine, that cake of soap certainly dissolved in time.

Jimmy served me a goodly portion of the boar meat. Both Lewis and myself enjoyed it. The meat was a bit stringy, but it was delicious, nevertheless.

The night dampness and mists began to settle. Without a word the Indians silently departed into the forests, to go back to their shelters and sleep in their hammocks. I asked Jimmy about the vampires and he assured me that the Indians were safe.

"Vampire bats ain't got no use for Injun, suh. Reckin they don't admire the taste of 'em."

The Indians sleep without clothes, other than the mesh-like flaps of the hammocks thrown over them, giving plenty of opportunity for the vampires and also for the really

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dangerous mosquitoes, which proved my undoing, as I will tell about later. The Indians seldom have jungle fever or malaria and if the mosquitoes do bite them there are no bad effects.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE SNAKE THAT DISAPPEARED

THAT night Cavan remarked that we were now getting into the big snake district.

"Big snake feller here plenty. Sho' he scar' yo'," said Cavan.

"How long?" I asked.

"Some like a tall tree, some not so much," said Cavan. And then they discussed the snakes, how they encircle wild boars and other big animals and "squeeze 'em inter a pulp an' eat 'em." It was interesting, but I found myself looking out into the jungle and imagining that every branch I could see was a giant snake.

That night I was awakened and felt my hair standing up and quivering and prickling at each root, for, hanging down from the tree in front of me, to which was suspended the foot end of my hammock, was a great

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snake. I couldn't stir at first. He lowered his head and swung it about like a pendulum, finally resting it on the foot of my hammock. Then, raising his head, he seemed to see me. In the dim light from a pale moon and a ghastly glow from the coals of our fire I could see the snake's bright eyes and his tongue darting in and out.

I tried to shout. I tried to look about and see if Lewis was still asleep, to see if he couldn't help me. I tried to call Jimmy, to see if he was awake, but couldn't seem to turn my head.

The snake slid further down the tree and glided across my stomach. He was so long that much of him was still draped up the tree and over a limb. He raised his head and opened his jaws, as if laughing at my helplessness, and I thought of many things.

I thought that it was a silly thing to have ventured off into these wilds. I wondered why I had not been satisfied to stay in a white man's country and not butt into the wild jungles of the Indians. I thought of everyone at home and finally decided that no snake was going to finish me that way without one

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good struggle. I looked keenly at his neck to decide just where his throat was, located it back of his jaws and, as he lunged at me, I let out a terrific yell and clutched both hands in a life-and-death grip around the neck of the great snake.

He tried to yank away and his strength lifted me upright from the hammock, his whole body quivered. Still I clung on. Then he began to writhe horribly and to thrash about, swaying me this way and that.

In the struggle I fell from the hammock to the ground, still with my deadly grip about that snake's neck. With my fingers clutched in a death grip about his throat, I felt that I would be better able to defend myself. I must have had this thought during the process of falling, for when I struck the ground with a terrific jolt I found my fingers clutched in the holster of my revolver.

Instantly I was on my feet, looking this way and that for the snake. There was no snake in sight! Where had he gone? I looked about again and discovered that there had been no snake at all!

It was the result of my talk with Jimmy

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and Cavan the night before about mammoth snakes. The perspiration was dripping from my face. I looked about stealthily to see if any of my companions had witnessed my dream struggles, but all seemed to be sleeping peacefully, so I climbed back into my hammock, yet the dream so upset me that I was unable to sleep any more. However, it was almost dawn.

"How did you sleep last night?" asked Lewis, when he sat up in his hammock.

"Bully," I declared, giving him a sharp look to see if he was trying to kid me about my foolish dream, but either he had not awakened or else was a good actor, for he never let on that he knew about it. My arm was sore for days where I bruised it in striking a rock as I landed beneath my hammock. It was the only bad dream I had during my months in the jungle, but it was quite enough.

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CHAPTER XIV

DIFFICULTIES OF JUNGLE TRAVEL

THE next two days our trip was disagreeable because of continued rains, but on the third day we camped at four-thirty close to a "path" that led to the largest Indian village. I was determined to visit it and pictured quite a little town. We could see the tall column of smoke from their fires.

My companion and I were so eager to get to this village next morning that we did not wait to eat, but, taking a handful of food, set out with one Boviander to carry a knife and lantern.

For the first time I learned something of the difficulties of jungle travel. We had to slash through vines, wade through bogs of slime and mud, clamber over gnarled roots and stumble around in the most tangled growth of vegetation I ever saw.

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"If this is a 'path,' " I said to Lewis, "I'm glad I'm not in the wilderness."

"No go outside path," grinned the Boviander.

We assured him that we would not, but we could find no trace of a path at all. When we were not in muddy bogs, feeling our way to make sure we would not step into some hole over our heads, or clambering around fallen trees and brush, we were going up short but steep little hills covered with tangled vines. After two hours of this, and being almost exhausted, we came to a clearing.

"Here it is," shouted Lewis.

And as if to prove it we heard a rooster crow. Eagerly we stumbled out into the clearing and saw the few huts, but the place was deserted.

"More further," said the Boviander; "someone he die."

By this he meant that some member of the village had died. The Indians always desert their village when anyone dies in it, and move on to establish another. They will never live in a village where anyone has died.

The lonely rooster crowed defiantly at us

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as we skirted the village to find the "path." Having found it we moved on about a mile.

"Ah, here we are," I declared as I came into an opening.

Not a soul in sight!

"Another die," commented our Boviander, shrugging his shoulders.

"If the death rate is very high we'll never overtake that village," grumbled Lewis.

Up above were tiny patches of blue, bits of the sky that we could see through the thick jungle growth. I saw some smoke and decided that at last we were close to the village. But at the opening we saw but a single "house" or shelter. The Indian came forward to see us.

Lewis had prospected up through this section before sending for me, and when he saw this Indian he exclaimed in a low voice, "That's Simon."

He didn't seem at all glad to find him there, but I had no opportunity to ask him about it before Simon, the Indian, advanced and, smiling as blandly as a Chinaman, exclaimed cordially:

"Me-a-ree!"

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He told us that the village was quite a distance on, and offered to lead us there. Lewis could not well refuse, as we had now gone far away from our camp and the district was wild and unknown to any of us. But I could see that he was not very well pleased with the prospect.

Simon motioned to his boy, a handsome, copper-colored youth, to start on with him, and proceeded to lead the way, taking a blowpipe and quiver of the poisoned arrows with him. This, too, troubled Lewis. But there seemed nothing else to do, so we followed.

On the way Lewis told me what was worrying him. During his previous prospecting trip when he went up the river to make sure that there were diamond fields before sending for me, he had found an old Indian very sick at one of the villages. This was Simon's father. Lewis did what he could for the sick old Indian, giving him quinine pills, the universal cure-all in the jungle, but the old man died.

On this trip one of our men had heard that Simon believed Lewis had purposely killed his father and that he did it with the "magic pills," as he called the quinine.

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"They say Simon has acted queerly ever since," explained Lewis, "and he may imagine that I really did kill his father and start a little 'ka-ni-a-mer' of his own between just him and me."

"And what on earth is a 'ka-ni-a-mer'?" I demanded.

"Just about the same as an old Kentucky feud where two families try for years to kill each other off. So you see I'm not extremely trustful of this bland Simon Injun," said Lewis.

"And to top it all," he added, "I dreamed the other night that my mother came and warned me to look out as I was to be in great danger."

This made me decidedly uneasy and I was determined to keep my eye on Simon every minute, staying between him and Lewis.

The trip to the village seemed long. There was considerable uphill going. Every once in a while Simon would turn and jabber at his boy, who would instantly look around at us, then reply to his father, who would hurry on faster than ever. They were setting a terrific pace. Already wearied with our travels

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before we came to Simon's hut, this was overdoing it just a little. But, worse than that, I got the idea that Simon was trying to lose us, to rush on far ahead and then hide and kill us — or kill Lewis anyway, with his blowpipe from ambush. I knew that just a scratch from the poisoned tip of one of those slender arrows would finish Lewis, or anyone else.

"You take my gun," I said to Lewis, "and take it easy, while I keep up with him and keep him right in plain sight."

Lewis is a heavy-built man and it was more difficult for him to keep up the hot pace uphill. I hurried on and got quite close to them. Simon spoke to his boy, who turned around and gave a little jump of astonishment to see me so close. He spoke sharply to his father, who turned around. Just as he turned around I purposely pulled my revolver from the holster with a great flourish.

To these native Indians our revolvers are wonderful and fearful things. They regard them with awe and also with fear. That so small a thing held lightly in the hand could deal death is one of the most amazing things they know about. When Simon saw this he

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at once slackened his pace and gave me another bland smile.

"Me-a-ree. Me-a-ree!" he said.

"Me-a-ree," I replied, but kept my revolver in my hand. After that he slowed up and made no attempt to lose us, but he kept looking back frequently and earnestly to make sure that I was not pointing the deadly "mystery gun" at him.

We passed many small platforms lashed to tall trees. I thought they were the "graves" of Indians, as I knew that many of our American Indians had the custom of leaving their dead on high platforms. But the Boviander explained that they were hunting stations. The Indians climb up and kneel on these platforms motionless for hours, waiting for game to pass so that they can kill it with blowpipes, spears, bows and arrows or with their crude guns.

It was getting late and I had just begun to wonder if we would have to camp in that dismal swamp all night when I heard the sound of a horn. It was some Indian call made by blowing on a shell. Simon nodded, meaning that it was the village.

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Soon we came into a great clearing. I expected to see a thriving village, since I had been assured that Assura was the largest of the Indian villages. And it was the largest, yet it consisted of only seven houses, with A-shaped roofs of reeds, and one larger or communal house with a conical roof.

Three of the mangiest, sorriest looking dogs I had ever beheld, howled mournfully when we came into the clearing, then tucked their tails between their legs and ran away to hide, having performed their duty of warning the villagers of our approach.

I was greatly interested, for the villagers did not know that we were coming and I was sure to find them in their primitive life without "putting on" for company. They flocked about us, more curious than we, for we had seen Indians and knew something about their customs by this time, but few of them had seen any white men except the Dutch and half-breed Dutch "pork-knockers," or wandering diamond miners.

As usual, they wore no clothes except the red loin cloth of the men and the queyu, or tiny apron of the women. But every gar-

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ment that we wore was a curiosity to them. I am sure that had we marched in there, wearing no more than a loin cloth, they would not have been greatly interested. But hats, coats, vests, trousers, leggings, shoes — all of those garments were wonderful curiosities to them all, as you may well imagine.

There was an all-around exchange of "Mea-rees" and we passed around some cigarettes, whereupon they knew that we were friends.

How they crowded about us, children with no clothes at all, and tiny babies that could not walk crawled along over the filthy ground, through spots of black mud and shallow pools of stagnant water, picking up the dirt and animal refuse from the ground and apparently feasting on it. It made us shudder to see them, yet those tiny babies seemed quite contented and quite healthy. At once I wondered what an American mother who dresses her baby in costly flannels and embroidered linens, places it in a hundred dollar baby carriage and wraps it in another hundred dollar fur robe, would say if her pink little darling were to be stripped and

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left to crawl about through the muck of this jungle clearing to get chummy with chiggers and stinging red ants, big ugly black beetles, mosquitoes and other things!

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CHAPTER XV

HOSPITALITY OF THE JUNGLE FOLK

IN pidgin English we made the men understand that we wanted six of them to go up the river with us, some to help us hunt, some to build a "logie" for Lewis and myself.

They agreed to go, but when we suggested that we start right away, they declined. We must wait another day. They could not set out without a supply of cassava, which is to them what our bread is to us, the staff of life. And they declared it too late to venture into the jungle, so we had to arrange to stay with them over night.

This interested me, as the night trip was not to my liking and I wanted to see Indian life at close range. Among the Indians was one called "Abraham," who had been with Lewis on his previous trip. He was an honest chap, faithful and a hard worker and fond of Lewis because of his name. It seems that on

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his prospecting trip Lewis liked this chap and asked him his name. Alas, he had none. Indians are given names by their medicine men, called "Peiman," or by the chief of the colony, at birth, providing their parents can pay enough in Indian trade goods. When Abraham was born his parents had nothing to give, so he went without a name. This is considered a calamity among the Indians, as a nameless one is quite liable, so they believe, to meet up with all of the misfortunes possible to befall a human being. Lewis liked him so well that he at once assumed the role of a "Peiman" and solemnly bestowed upon him the name of "Abraham." For this Abraham would do anything for Lewis.

There was another Indian who interested us. He had but one eye, but was almost a giant in build. He always had a jolly grin and as we liked him and found him to be nameless, I gravely assured him that I could bestow names. He begged me to do so.

"Gi' me call by," he said.

"You shall henceforth be called by 'Lewis,'" I said, with a dramatic gesture, winking at Lewis, who grinned at the joke.

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Soon I had taught him just how to speak the word "Lewis" and he was a very proud Indian.

Each "house" consisted of only a reed and palm-leaf roof supported on poles, there being no sides to any of them. The supply of household goods was pitifully small indeed. There were plenty of weapons, a few cassava-making implements, a rare metal dish or tin can and hammocks everywhere. The Indian women sit in these hammocks doing their weaving or bead work by day and all sleep in them by night. There was a fire at each hut, made of logs which were arranged like the spokes of a wheel, the inner ends, or "hub" being the fire. As the ends would burn away the logs would be pushed in toward the center and new ones added as the old ones burned up. These fires supplied plenty of heat for cooking and enough warmth for the night chill and they were never allowed to go out. In some places a village is not moved for a year or two, depending upon whether there is a death there, and a fire once started burns steadily on that spot all of the time.

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THEY SEEMED GLAD TO POSE FOR US

JUNGLE HUNTSMEN

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We were tired and wet. We needed food and rest and told Abraham this, whereupon he promptly gave up his house to Lewis and myself and took his wife and flock of children over to the communal house with the conical roof.

We livened up the fire and decided to remove our wet clothes and dry them. We had just about as much privacy as a goldfish, and the villagers flocked about us in great excitement as we proceeded to strip off our outer garments.

We stripped down to our flannel underwear and decided to sit about our roaring fire and get dry while our clothes dried. But the natives eagerly asked the privilege of taking our clothes and drying them for us. There seemed no way out of it and I wondered if I was going to be left to travel through the jungle in nothing but underwear. But I should not have feared. They were honest enough. They merely wished to borrow our clothes to strut about in for a while. One big chap had my hat cocked on his head at the "tough guy" angle as if he had worn one all his life. Two giggling young women

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divided my big boots, each wearing one, and marched proudly about, the thong ties dragging. An old man put on my coat. But the trousers were too wet, so they escaped. Next morning they were returned, well dried and nothing whatever missing from the pockets.

I sat in a hammock, slung close to the fire, drying my wet socks and the legs of my underclothes, watching the women prepare a meal of eggs, venison, labbas and cassiri for us, and grinned at the picture we must have made.

"Not quite up to the etiquette of polite society at home," I said to Lewis.

"But we are overdressed, even now," he answered, "according to the style down here."

The houses are called "benabs." Abraham said he would bring the food over to our benab. This he did. It was smoking hot, heaped up in one big wooden dish, and with it a calabash, or gourd, of cassiri. This was a bright pink liquid, most sickening in appearance. The Indians all drank out of the same big gourd and seemed to enjoy it.

Lewis took a taste.

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"Great," he said.

I didn't like his expression when he said it, but was determined to try anything once, so I tasted it.

"U-r-r-r-gh!"

Dud. Lewis had his back to me. I could see that he was shaking with laughter.

"For two cents I'd pour this pink slop down your neck!" I gasped.

The Indians looked on and grinned. I did not wish to be impolite, so I said, "Yaa! Cassiri too much humbug Yankee man's stomach!" and I hugged my stomach as if in pain and smiled to assure them of good feeling. They merely laughed.

This drink tasted like sour milk, long overripe strawberries, vinegar, pepper, sour yeast, cassava meal and whatever else they might have had left over to dump into it. But the venison was delicious and the labba, which is a sort of pig about the size of a rabbit, was as good meat as I ever tasted. The cassava is not bad at all and so we managed to make out a very good meal. But if I had taken a big swallow of that pink cassiri I am sure my stomach would have burned up or exploded.

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It came time for us to get some sleep if ever we were to turn in. While we were fairly dry, there was a dampness in the air and we had only our underclothes. But the headman of the village brought out three strips of cotton cloth he had been hoarding in an old canister, another loaned a frayed old shirt he had got in some trade, another contributed a pair of red cotton trousers. My shirt and tunic were dry and with these, divided between Lewis and me, we turned in to our hammocks. We tried a fire of glowing coals under our hammocks as did some of the Indians, but the smoke was too much for us and we had to move the fire. Besides, I didn't want to have any more snake dreams and fall out in a bed of hot coals.

I lay there listening to the jungle noises and trying to guess what sort of beast, bird or reptile was making them, when it came time for the Indians to turn in. Just as the village became quiet and the babies stopped squalling and the kids stopped chattering, there came a native song.

"This is a great time to start singing!" I grumbled to Lewis.

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"Go to sleep and don't mind it," he advised.

"I can't sleep until he stops that fool song," I insisted.

"Ha-ha," laughed Lewis, "you've got some fine little wait coming." He covered himself in his hammock and proceeded to sleep. I didn't understand what he meant at the time, but I learned, for I waited and waited for the singer to stop. But when he got tired, another singer took it up and then another and another.

They keep that song going *all night* every night of their lives.

There was nothing for me to do but to remain in my hammock and listen to that terrible singing. The voices were not so bad, nor were they harsh, but there didn't seem to be much melody in what they sang and after you have heard the same gibberish sung over and over and over for about a million times (so it seemed to me) you certainly get good and tired of it.

It was no effort on my part to learn the song. I got so that I knew just what the next line would be and I found myself muttering

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it along with whichever Indian happened to be taking his "spell" at singing it.

"What does it mean?" I asked many. But the best answer I could get was that it was a "sort of song to keep danger away at night."

It also kept sleep away from me for several hours, although I finally did get to sleep in spite of it and did not awaken until daylight had come and the singing had ceased. I always wished that I could get a translation of the song, but I will repeat it as it sounded:

"Ip phoo ke na, pagee ko, ip phoo ke na;
Waku beku yean gee ma ta ne ke, ip phoo ke na pegge ko.
Ip phoo ke na, ip phoo ke na pagee ko,
Ip phoo ke na, ip phoo ke na pagge ko,
Ip phoo ke na, ip phoo ke na."

These Indians seemed the most restless people on earth. Before I fell asleep I watched them in the big communal hut which was within twenty feet of me. I learned afterwards that when going on a long trip they sit up most of the night and stuff themselves with food. They seemed to be eating all night here, and drinking that pink cassiri.

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They would wander about inside their shelter, sit in a hammock eating, walk over to the calabash and drink the cassiri and back to the hammock again.

"If that's the life of a British Guiana Indian, then I'm glad that I am not one of them. None of this free and untrammeled child-of-nature life for me," I told Lewis afterward.

"Wonder what they would say if they saw so many of our people back home sitting up until nearly daylight having banquets, dancing the fox-trot and one-step and hesitation and opening wine and smoking and having a regular night of it," was his quiet comment.

It was good food for thought. The more I figured it out, the more I wondered just where the line between "civilization" and "barbarity" was drawn. I am sure that they did not injure their health as much with their cassava cakes and fruits, eaten during the night, as so many of our so-called "sports" do with their all night dancing and drinking and smoking and eating of lobster a la king and other fancy and expensive foods.

Some of them were drinking a black liquid from a gourd. This was "piwarree."

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"Don't drink it," warned Lewis.

"Thanks for the tip, old man," I answered, "but there aren't enough diamonds in South America to get me to touch it."

It was the most vile looking liquid I ever saw, yet the Indians seemed to enjoy it and it did not appear to intoxicate them, although there was probably alcohol in it, as it was made by a fermenting process. I had seen a number of women who wore a peculiar tattoo mark on their foreheads. I had thought it merely some sort of barbaric adornment, but it seems this was their "trade mark." It indicated that they were piwarree makers. These women, to make this drink, sit in a circle about a fire where cassava cakes are allowed to bake until they are burned through quite crisp and black. Each woman chews this burned bread until it is soft and pulpy with her saliva. This she strains through her teeth into a vessel in the center. When the vessel is full the contents are thrown into a large wooden trough and boiling water poured over it. It is allowed to ferment. When quite sour and black it is ready for drinking.

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CHAPTER XVI

CASSAVA CAKES AND BLOW-PIPES

IN the morning I expected to start out, but learned that the cassava cakes must be made. The women had started the process the night before. But after that I frequently saw it made and the process is interesting.

Cassava is a root, something like a large turnip, yet longer and more in the shape of an immense sweet potato. The inside is quite white and somewhat soft, a trifle "woody," like a turnip that we would throw away. These roots grow wild. There is no cultivating necessary, although in some localities they cut away the other vegetation and allow the cassava plants to thrive a little better.

A grater is made by driving sharp bits of flint into a board. This is covered with a sort of wax which hardens and leaves only the sharp tips of the flints sticking out. The

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women peel the cassava roots with dull knives or sharp flints. The root is then grated over this flint grater and the fine particles fall down into a woven frame.

Next comes the "metapee." This is a most peculiar basket, made solely for the manufacture of cassava flour. It may be pulled out long or pushed in short. It works something like an old-fashioned "accordion" hat rack. When pushed down short it is very large around but as it is pulled out it grows smaller and smaller in circumference. It is a great trick to weave these metapee baskets, for they must be exceedingly strong.

The grated cassava is put in the metapee when it is squat down short and large around. One end of this basket is hung from a pole or limb. In the bottom of the metapee is a loop through which a pole is run. One end of the pole is lashed to the ground, at the foot of a tree. The woman now sits on the other end of the pole. This makes a lever and her weight stretches the metapee out into a long wicker cylinder. This squeezes all of the moisture out of the ground cassava root. And here is a most remarkable thing — that juice

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AT FOURTEEN AN INDIAN GIRL MUST BE ABLE TO COOK CASSAVA

A PRIMITIVE SUGAR CANE PRESS

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is a deadly poison! Yet the pulp that remains makes a nourishing bread.

The woman bounces up and down on her end of the pole until every bit of the juice is out. This juice is saved, as the poison can be used by the men. Or the juice may be allowed to evaporate and what remains of that, instead of being poison, is good seasoning for food!

The pulp is spread in the sun to dry. When dry it is sifted through a basket sieve and becomes rather coarse flour. To this water is added, the dough is kneaded with the fists much as our women knead wheat flour and water into dough. This dough is flattened out into cakes three feet in diameter and half an inch thick and baked on a flat slab, a sheet of iron if it be possible to get it, or on anything handy. The bread is now ready to eat. It is firm, fairly hard, rather crisp and has but little flavor. To me it tasted like refined sawdust. But it is extremely nourishing.

It takes half an hour to cook these cassava cakes and, kept dry, they will last a great while. That is why the women baked a number of them to take with them upon the im-

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pending journey. It was comforting to have this much certain about the uncertain journey which we were now to take.

While the Indian women busied themselves making cassava cakes for the journey back to our camp I studied all of the weapons of the men in the village, for they interested me. There were but two guns in the village, owned by the chief and another very "wealthy" native. These were the muzzle-loading "lead" guns.

What interested me most of all was the blowpipe. It is really a wonderful weapon. It is a wonder to me that we boys back home did not make similar weapons. I am sure that with a little skill we could have picked off rabbits, squirrels and game birds, although, of course, we would have had to become good woodsmen. Of all the weapons to be faced, I believe the blowpipe as made and used by these Indians is the most deadly. I would rather face almost anything else.

These pipes are from eight to twelve feet long. They are made of two strong reeds, a hollow-stemmed variety that grows in the jungle. They take the midribs of a great

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palm leaf, dry them, split them up, char one end in the fire to make it hard, and with this force out the little partitions that appear at the joints in all reeds, as in bamboo. Then a smaller reed is found that will just slide inside the larger one. They now have a double reed which makes an extremely long yet strong tube. The hole is made through the inner reed in the same manner, and these palm midribs and fine sand are worked inside the inner tube until it is quite as smooth as a rifle bore.

The arrows are made from the same palm midribs, split as fine as an eighth of an inch in thickness. While at work mining I hired an Indian boy to make a collection of bird skins for me. These boys can skin a bird perfectly and prepare the skin so that it will be like soft, thin kid, without misplacing a feather. I watched this boy make blowpipes and arrows. He dried the palm midribs in the sun a few days and they split readily into as fine arrows as he needed.

Just how he made the deadly poison with which he tipped them I was not certain. I will admit that we kept clear of that poison just as you would keep clear of dynamite.

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I know that it was made from crushed leaves and roots and put in a gourd. This poison is called "waurali." As soon as the poison is dried on, in the sun, a string is woven in and out around each end of each arrow until there is a long row of them, and this is rolled around a stick so that there is a solid roll of these arrows, which may be pulled out one by one.

The quiver is made of woven grass, the bottom made of some wax that hardens from trees. This roll of arrows is placed, poison tips up, in the quiver and a skin top put over them to keep out moisture. Attached to the quiver is a small basket containing loose cotton.

When the boy was ready to shoot a bird he would remove one of the arrows, pinch off a bit of cotton from the basket and wrap it loosely around the blunt end. Thrusting the arrow into the tube this cotton made it fit just enough to take the compression of air. Sighting the bird, the boy placed the blowpipe to his lips, aimed at the bird and gave a sudden sharp puff.

The speed of that slender arrow was mar-

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TWO QUICK PUFFS, A FLUTTER,
AND THE BIRD DROPS TO EARTH

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velous. Seldom did the boy miss. If the bird was merely scratched, it would fly but a short distance before the deadly poison would get in its work and then it would come fluttering to the ground, quite dead by the time the boy, running after it, would pick it up. Sometimes the great tapirs, as large as a hog, would be killed by these slender arrows.

Their bows and arrows interested me. Their bows are longer than most of those used by the American Indians, being six feet or more. And these men are generally smaller than the American Indians. They have many kinds of arrows for the various game, and they also use a sort of harpoon, a large barbed spearhead on the arrow with a long stout woven cord fastened to it. This is for shooting fish.

One day an Indian took the fruit of a star apple tree, wove a loose covering for it, hung it in a pool of water at the shore of the river from a limb overhead and waited. I saw a great fish dart for this bait and at the same time "Zowie!" went this harpoon arrow.

There was a great thrashing about in the water, but the Indian calmly hauled in his

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harpoon and there was a big pacu on it, a very tasty fish when properly cooked. They also use hand spears with a half dozen barbed points branching out and get many fish in that manner.

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CHAPTER XVII

ON THE MARCH AGAIN

BY the time I had watched the cassava cake making process and examined the weapons in the village and noted almost everything of how they lived, the Indians were ready to go on with us. They had been eating all night as I explained. Now they took a hasty farewell drink of that pink stuff, cassiri, and took a large mouthful of cassava cake; their baskets were already packed for travel, and so we started.

But did they carry their baskets?

No indeed! That would have been a disgrace, like a man washing dishes or making a dress for baby. Carrying the luggage was woman's work. What did each man have a wife for if not to do his work? The men set off with only their weapons, and the women fastened the heavy baskets to their backs by means of vine ropes around their foreheads.

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Each man carried various objects in his basket, some tools, hunks of smoked meat, some extra loin cloths with perhaps a ragged old shirt secured from some "pork knocker." On top of these belongings was placed a stack of the cassava cakes and covered with palm leaves to keep out the rain, for it showed signs of raining when we set out.

The Indians went on ahead. The women followed. They had removed whatever garments they owned — some of them had loose garments, merely for style, made of strips of cotton — and traveled only with those little beaded aprons or queyus. We came last, but after a while the women stepped out of the path and let us go on ahead. I think they wanted to watch us, just as we would like to stay behind and watch something curious walking on ahead.

We thought we had a hard trip getting to the village, but we were in for the hardest traveling afoot that I ever knew. I called it "land swimming." The mud was literally knee deep. We would put one foot down, then the next one, stand still and pull one foot out with a great effort, step ahead with that,

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pull the other out with a great sucking sound, and so on. It was only with great endurance that we made this trip through the rain, but even the worst journey must come to an end and finally we reached our own camp. Nothing ever looked more homelike than our shelters, our fires and the boats moored alongside.

Lewis and I made a dash for the boat to get some dry warm clothes. Jimmy, glad to see us back, made some hot tea. Soon we had on lighter shoes, dry woolen underclothes and dry suits and socks, lay back in our hammocks and drank good hot tea and felt none the worse for our journey into the primitive homes of the Indians.

We gave the women plenty to eat and made them presents of sugar, rice, salt and tea to take back with them. They were the happiest women you ever saw and chattered among themselves like kids at a Christmas tree. Then they turned and went back into the forests without a word of leave taking to their husbands, as this toting of their husbands' baskets was all in their day's work.

Of all the sticky, funny messes I ever saw it was the packs of these Indians. The rain

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had soaked through the palm leaves on top and through the meshes of the baskets at the sides. The cassava cakes had dissolved into a soft, semi-liquid dough. This had run down through the contents of the baskets. Nearly every one contained bits of red cloth — an Indian's choice possession. The colors had run and there were pink dough and dough-covered arrows and pink smoked meat and sticky, cassava dough enameled shirts. It was a great mess, but the Indians scraped the dough together to dry out in the sun the next day and worried not at all, for the cassava dough would all dry and be rubbed off their belongings.

While the Indians like the white men, they do not like the blacks. They get along with them all right because they have nothing whatever to do with the "Me-go-ro-man" as they call them. Our blacks, as usual, had their three shelters a distance from ours. The Indians built a hasty shelter alongside our canvas one, slung their hammocks, now daubed with dough, and climbed in. Jimmy started the victrola, the camp fires burned brightly despite the rain, and the Indians sat

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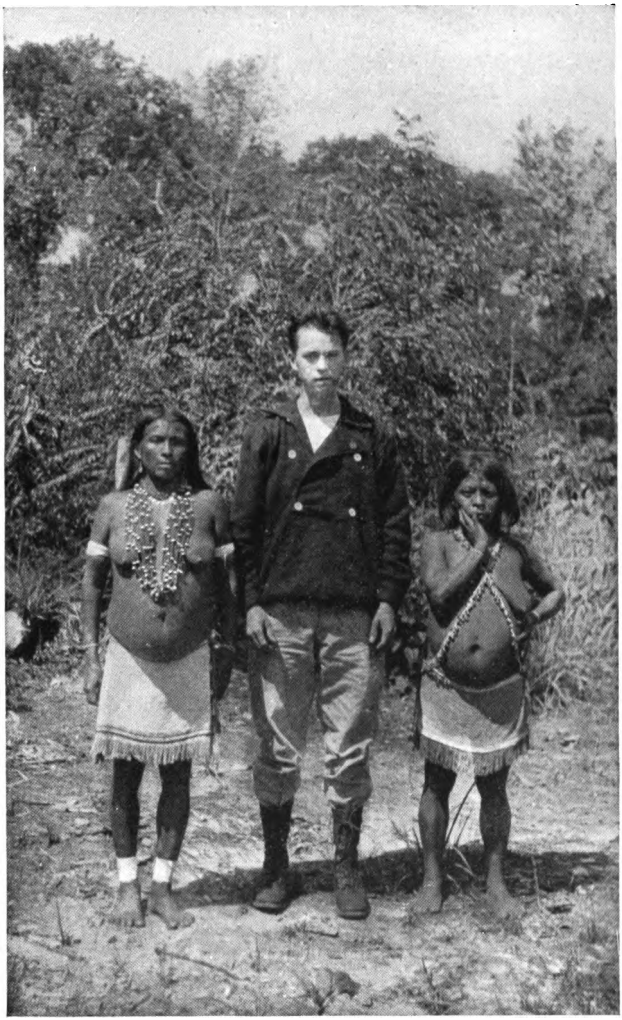

MY JUNGLE FRIENDS

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up and stared open-eyed, at the "hoodoo" box from which came the, to them, weird sounds. They believed that the spirits of the dead were inside that victrola, but when they saw Jimmy putting on the records and saw that no ghosts came out to kill them, they lost their fear of it.

The plaintive Southern melodies seemed to please them most. Next in their favor was a weird jazz number. From the wet jungle came the peculiar roar of red baboons. We would have fresh baboon steak next day, if we could spare an hour for hunting.

And then from the black, dismal depths of that dripping jungle came the most pitiful sobbing that I ever heard. Whether a child or a woman, or a number of them, I could not make out. I leaped from my hammock, wondering what was happening to them, if they were lost, and trying to guess how far into the jungle we would have to travel to rescue them.

Never had I heard such distress as that weeping and wailing and heartbreaking sobbing.

I pictured some helpless women there, per-

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haps being attacked by wild animals. Even if they were Indian women, still they were humans, I thought —

"Black night monkey," said Jimmy.

I looked at Lewis. He smiled and nodded.

For a moment I could scarcely believe that such human crying could come from animals.

"They always cry all night," Lewis told me. "Very annoying at first. You'll get used to it. Just remember that they are ugly black monkeys, that they like to make that noise, that they are not really crying any more than a dog is crying when he barks, and now go to sleep."

No one else seemed to mind it. But I must admit that it kept me awake a long while. I couldn't force myself to think that it was a natural noise made by an animal. I couldn't believe anything could make such a noise unless it was actual crying caused by grief or suffering. Finally I fell asleep.

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CHAPTER XVIII

ARRIVAL AT THE DIAMOND FIELDS

NEXT morning the sun was shining brightly. The Indians were coming in from a hunting trip with game. Our blacks had finished their tea and crackers, the shelters were coming down and soon we would be on the way up the river.

"We ought to make the big bend by to-morrow," said Captain Peters.

Those were thrilling words to me, for up just around the big bend in the Mazaruni River, which I have already described, lay our diamond fields, and while every inch of the seventeen days' boat trip up this mad, wild river, among the primitive Indians, had been one of interest and adventure for me, after all, I was out for diamonds and naturally eager to get to the fields and try my luck at digging up the sparklers. Of course I did not expect to pick them up off the ground.

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"Dud" Lewis had told me of the process and I had read up on diamond mining before starting, yet I had high hopes of finding wealth there in the gravel of the old river bed. Mountains could be seen in the distance rising like temples above the low land.

Nothing startling occurred that day. I believe I saw more birds than usual, and the banks became less marshy. The jungle seemed to be slightly changing into a trifle higher and drier forest land. It was still thick, almost impenetrable, yet a bit different.

On the seventeenth day we came to a small portage. We could not paddle over it, yet it was not necessary to remove all of our five tons of supplies. Lightening our cargo about one half, the men jumped out, fastened the ropes astern and the single rope to the bow for the last time on our upriver trip and hauled away with a will.

Soon we were over, goods repacked and the blacks paddling in still, smooth water, but more vigorously than usual as they, too, were glad to be at the end of their hard journey. Seventeen days of paddling a fifty-foot boat made of great planks and laden with five tons

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of goods, hauling it over portages, is not exactly a picnic, and the men certainly earned their forty-eight cents a day. And so they thumped and scraped their much-worn paddles along the gunwales of that old boat, worn smooth with constant paddling, and they sang their everlasting paddle song with more cheerfulness than they had done for days.

Finally Captain Peter spoke something to the bowman while he swung his steering paddle over, and our craft put in shore. We nosed about and found just the site we needed, and proceeded to unload everything, this time to set up our mining camp.

A temporary shelter went up to store the goods under, with low hanging eaves to keep out the rain. We had now got into a country where there were no more haphazard rains. We could almost set our watches by the rains, which came regularly every morning about daybreak, for a half hour or more, and again every night right after sunset, for a little while. Although these twice-a-day rains were of short duration the water certainly came down in bucketfuls while it was raining.

A rack of poles kept our goods from the

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ground so that the rain could run underneath. Our shelters went up for that night, and eagerly I began to study the gravel formation, really not expecting to see any diamonds, but anxious to study the soil and somehow all the time wondering if, by chance, I might not see a diamond in the dirt. Every sparkling bit of rock I picked up. Lewis laughed good-naturedly at this, but he was quite as eager as I to get at the business for which we had the long, tiresome and really costly trip.

We had journeyed 300 miles up the river. At this point the Mazaruni had once flowed over the dry land where our camp was located. Some convulsion of nature, probably of volcanic origin, had changed the course of the river, and it was in this dry and ancient river bed that we hoped to find a fortune.

For tools we had brought along only the simplest kind, good old picks and shovels, and a hand pump. We had plenty of material with us for making the mining apparatus, crude but necessary, but there was a great deal to be done and we decided to get well settled and start in right.

First we had to have a permanent home, a

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"logie," which is much like a bungalow, only more open and quite high and dry. Then we had to make good shelters for our three groups of blacks, and also for what Indians we would find it necessary to hire.

We also had to set up our mine, arrange with Indians to hunt a steady supply of food, make a permanent cooking place and get as comfortable as possible so that we could go ahead with our diamond mining without interruption.

Two beautiful white egrets sailed up the river and, without fear of us at all, proceeded to make a nesting place close to our camp site. I considered this to be a good omen. The wonderful crest feathers on their heads would have brought several hundred dollars in the days before wise lawmakers at home forbade bringing such feathers into the country.

"How about tigers?" I asked of Captain Peter.

There had been frequent talk of them. It is true that there is a species of large and ferocious jaguar that haunts the wilds of British Guiana and I hoped to bag at least

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one and take the skin home as a trophy. Captain Peter smiled.

"As scarce as hens' teeth," he said.

I wondered where he got that expression. Perhaps they use it all over the world. I know that we use it at home in all parts of the country, yet it surprised me to hear this Dutchman, who for twenty years had navigated the wild waters of the old Mazaruni, say it.

It was a disappointment to hear him declare that tigers were scarce. I had visions of stalking one and proudly bringing his carcass into camp.

I got a tiger skin all right before I left the country, but there is no glamor of adventure about it. I cannot exhibit it at home and spin yarns of stalking the ferocious jungle beast, for it was an old skin and I bought it from an Indian for five dollars' worth of trade articles.

The Indians get a tiger now and then, but will not journey far afield just to bag them as they are not fit to eat and are extremely dangerous beasts to face, even for the skilled natives.

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CHAPTER XIX

HOW THE NATIVES HUNT AND FISH

FOR four long, busy months, we were to delve into that pebbly soil, and during that time I would also learn much of hunting and fishing that was strange indeed. I was especially interested in the manner in which the Indians get fish by poisoning them. Of course that seems very unsportsmanlike to us at home, but remember that these natives do not hunt and fish for the *sport* of it, but to *live*. And then, bear in mind that while we have telescope steel rods and artificial bait and ball bearing automatic reels and oiled silk lines and transparent gut leaders, floats, spoons, spinners, rubber minnows, hundreds of artificial flies, nets for landing the fish, gaffs, and every sort of fishing tackle, these Indians have not even common hooks and sinkers. Spears and harpoon arrows are their only means of fishing, aside from poison. Consequently one should not say that they were

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unsportsmanlike, although I felt that way about it at first. Thinking it over I decided differently.

They have several means of catching fish by poison and I must say that it is a far better way than that of some of the game hogs in this country who dynamite lakes and rivers for fish, killing far more than they can get, while with the poison the fish not taken soon recover and are as lively as ever.

Our Indians paddled into a small inlet of the river one day where there is quite a deep pool that back-waters in. Hauling the canoe out on land they proceeded to fill it with hairy vines and water. With heavy sticks they crushed these vines. As I looked on with interest, one Indian pointed to the liquid and said, "Kill um," meaning that it was poison.

After the vines were well crushed they tipped the contents of the canoe into the pool and within five minutes a great quantity of fish arose and floated on the surface. They collected the largest and best of these for food and as soon as the poison in the pool had thinned out the other fish recovered and were as well as ever. I was afraid that the poison

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would render the fish unfit for food but found that it did not affect them at all in that manner. It certainly was an easy way to catch fish and for a party as large as ours, the twenty blacks and the group of Indian hunters, it took a lot of fish and game to feed us.

Probably the most interesting method of catching fish as practiced by these clever Indians was by means of poisoned grasshoppers. They made a paste of the leaves of the quanamia, a strong narcotic plant. Catching large grasshoppers they filled the stomachs of these insects with the paste and tossed them into the water. The fish would leap up and swallow the grasshoppers, only soon after to turn, belly up, and float on the surface where they were picked up.

Here we found the game more abundant than ever, which was natural as we were far out of the haunts of blacks and Dutch, except for the few "pork knockers," or tramp diamond miners, and there were probably no more than a score all up and down the fields.

Several kinds of animals were shot, but the favorite food was deer and labbas. The tap-

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irs are like great hogs and their meat is rather tough though nourishing. The labbas also belong to the hog family but are about as big as jack rabbits. Small game birds were also plentiful. The maams were the best game birds, about the size of a very small turkey and much like them. The white people call them bush turkeys but scientists say that they do not properly belong to the turkey family. We didn't care what family they belonged to, we found the meat delicious.

I do not mean that the game was so plentiful that it came down to us and begged to be shot. But our Indian hunters seldom went out without bringing back some meat. It was a cheerful sight to see three or four hunters come marching in, each with a part of a great tapir or deer slung over his back. We were sure of "fresh pork," as we called it, for days.

One of our Indians had hunted steadily for three days without any success and he was getting decidedly sore about it. He had not seen an animal in any of his wanderings. When he returned empty handed on the third day I tried to cheer him.

"How come, buck man?"

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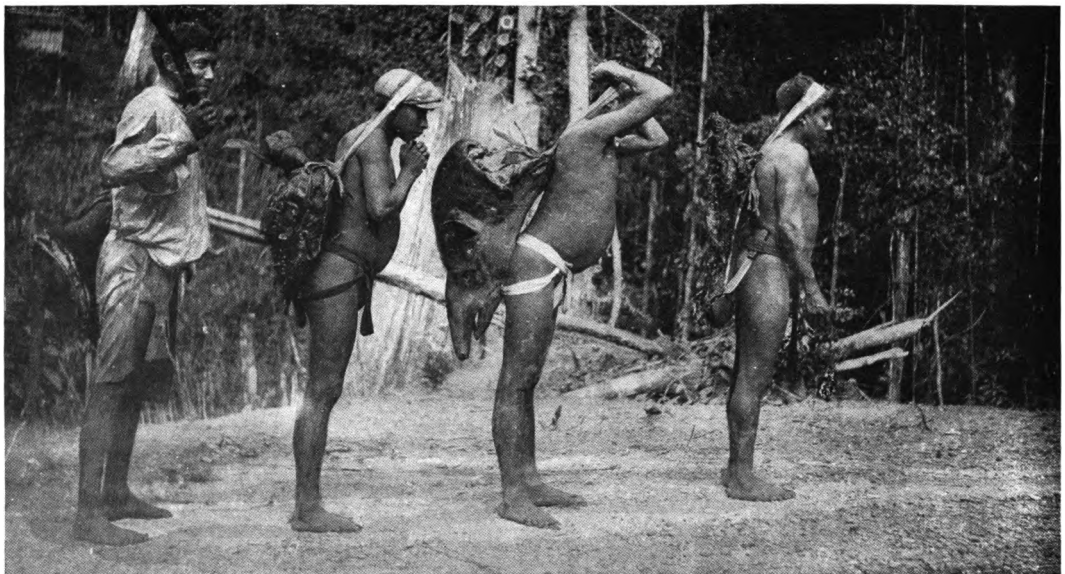

USUALLY OUR HUNTERS WERE SUCCESSFUL

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"No thing," he grunted.

"Too much sit down," I said.

"No sit down!" he protested. "Wakwak-wak (walk), all tam wak. Me no see. How can shoot um me no see?"

There was no argument there. If he saw nothing he certainly could bag no game. But this Indian was superstitious, as all are. He got an idea that there was black magic in my camera, and it bothered him.

"Too much humbug," he said, pointing to my camera which I happened to have with me. "You tak picture all tam, put um picture on paper and sho all mans. Deer know this and be bexed (vexed) see um picture on paper. Run away. How go for catch if no see?"

This was a lengthy outburst for an Indian. He had reference to my taking his picture as he came into camp with various kinds of game over his shoulders. He believed that the dead game knew its picture was taken and that its spirit warned the living game to keep away because the picture taking was an insult. He did not reason that the game would be warned to keep away from him to

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save its life, but only to escape the insult of having its picture taken. Hence his argument that the game was "bexed" and kept out of sight.

"No get um. Must catch beena," he said, earnestly. A "beena" is some sort of a rite or charm that the hunters go through in order to give them good fortune or luck or whatever it is they most desire. There is a different sort of beena for each thing. I gave him a half day holiday to "catch beena." Being especially anxious to bag deer he was going to "catch deer beena." The sly fellow had hidden away somewhere, just for this emergency, the nose of a deer.

Beena may bring good luck but I would not care for good luck earned in that manner. This chap heated the nose of the deer on a shovel over coals until it fairly sizzled. Then he cut slashes, not deep, but enough to draw blood, on his chest, arms and legs and rubbed that hot, greasy nose into the cuts. He believed that the fat thus entering his body or blood would enable him to get all the deer he wished, as it would give him power over them.

That afternoon he went out, and, sure

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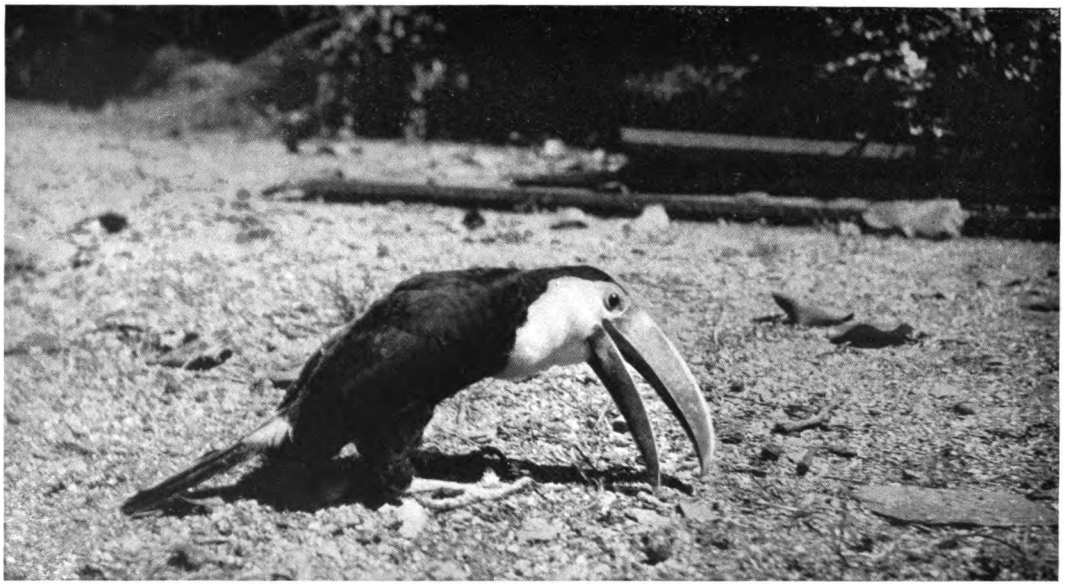

THE TOUCAN MAKES AN INTERESTING PET

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enough, he returned with a big deer. I did not dare photograph it for fear the Indian would become frightened or discouraged, and leave. No power on earth could persuade him that it was due to any other reason than his beena that he got the deer.

As I explained, I took many pictures but lost the greater part of them through attempting to develop the films in the hot climate. Birds of unusual variety, to me, were photographed in plenty. The toucans were interesting birds. They would come quite close to us, and I managed to get a snapshot of one not more than ten feet away, just as he was apparently sharpening his gigantic beak on the shore gravel.

I found the Indians to be not only interesting but very likable chaps. I formed a strong friendship and they likewise became very friendly with me. I learned much of their language, had them at our logie for guests on a great many occasions and, after a manner, got so that I could talk well with them and learn much of their lives, their ambitions, their joys and sorrows. Their language is called "Akowoia."

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The taste of the Indians in food I could never learn, such as their terrible drinks, the smoked intestines and the eyes of animals which they cook as a great delicacy. Nor am I at all fond of their pastry. It is simply a dough made of flour, salt and soda mixed with river water and fried in much grease in a frying pan. But their cooked fresh fish, their boiled tapir and other game meats are always good, clean and appetizing.

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CHAPTER XX

PICKING UP JUNGLE LORE

THE upper part of the Mazaruni River is no place for a white man to take up a permanent abode. Only once in a great while has a white man been known to live more than a year in that climate. I have heard of one or two who lived there for several years, but they finally died. It is a strange thing the lure of fortune. Such men know full well that no white man can escape death if he stays there for much more than six months. Yet each individual seems to feel that he will manage in some way to escape the dread and deadly jungle fever. He is having good luck getting diamonds, he stays on and on for "just a few more, just a few more," so that he may go back wealthy, and then comes the fever and either death or a quick get-away. I could not then foresee the danger that faced

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me and was to bring a sudden end to my own adventures in the wilds.

Most white men have to use quinine continually. Dud. Lewis took quantities of it every day. He took so much that it made him temporarily deaf. I was afraid to take too much of it as I didn't care to become deaf nor did I want the headaches that it frequently caused. Of course I took some from time to time, but in small quantities.

One great trouble was our lack of fresh water. We had only the river water and it was dangerous to drink that without purifying it. The Indians and even the blacks seemed to get along well enough on it and would drink right out of the river.

We had "steel drops" with us, a highly concentrated form of iron. One drop in a gallon of water was sufficient to remove the danger of disease from drinking the water. We also used bits of rusty iron. By keeping these in the water it was fairly safe, but it was always muddy. And it was always warm. I learned to get used to it. We used to keep it in jars and pails with a wet cloth over it in order to cool it.

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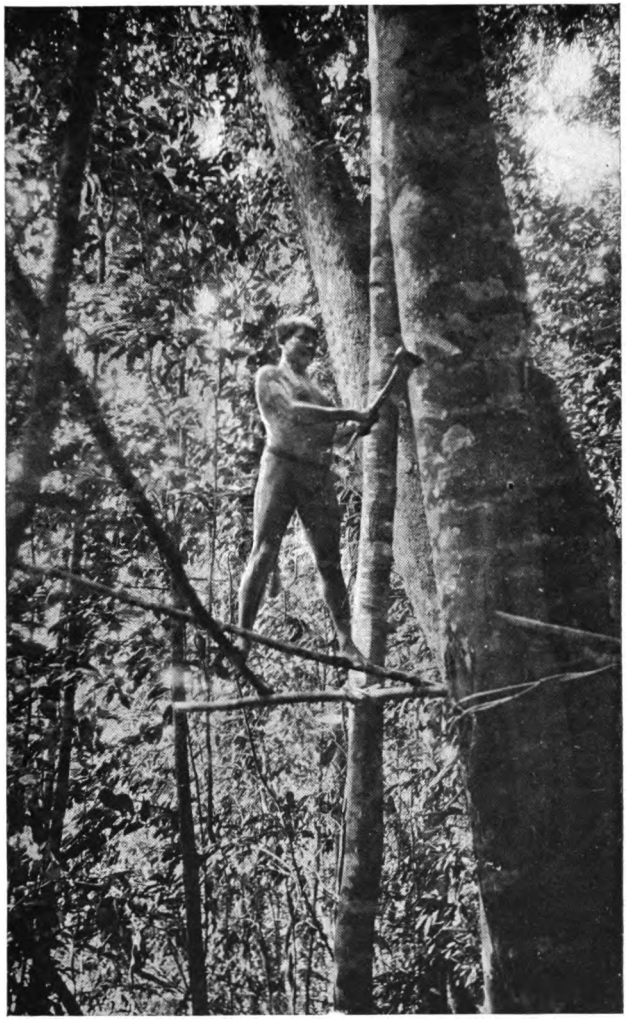

ABRAHAM, FELLING A WOODSKIN TREE

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While there were a few poisonous snakes about, they seemed no more plentiful than are the rattlesnakes, copperheads and moccasins in certain parts of the United States, and we had no trouble with them. I never saw any of the big boa constrictors or other snakes, that I had been told about, but presume there were plenty of them in the deep marshlands if one cared to hunt the reptiles.

Frequently I had seen Indians gliding about the river in the most peculiar and frail looking craft I had ever beheld.

"Make um woodskin," the Indians told me.

I examined one and it was nothing more than the bark of a tree. Not at all like the birch bark used by our Indians, nor like rough elm bark, but more like the tough, smooth bark of the basswood or ironwood trees at home.

One time I was fortunate enough to see and photograph the whole process of woodskin canoe making. I went with the Indians back somewhat from the water to where they had located a giant woodskin tree. These trees start at the base with mammoth trunks, which

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taper up for fifteen feet or more before they continue as a straight and rather symmetrical trunk. The bark of the tapering part is useless in canoe making and so the Indians build a frail platform or foot rest of poles that will enable them to reach the straight, even part of the trunk with an axe. Standing there they soon have the tree felled. But before it falls they build a supporting frame so that it will not lie on the ground, because if this heavy tree were resting its weight on the ground it would be impossible to remove the bark.

When the tree is down and resting on the frames upon which it fell, the Indians arrange poles that will enable them to stand and reach one side. They cut the bark clear around the tree at the length which they wish for the canoe, then they slit the bark in an even line between the two cuts and gradually pry it off, putting in braces until it is wedged open sufficiently to slip off the trunk.

Two braces are then fitted into this, and it is left to dry; as the drying takes place the ends are drawn up a little. That is all there

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PREPARING WOODSKIN BARK
FOR CANOE

FINISHED WOODSKIN CANOE
WITH ENDS OPEN

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is to it. The canoe is ready for ordinary smooth water traveling, once it is dry, for in the shrinking the braces are so wedged in that they will never pull out. For smooth water paddling the canoe is left with both ends open. But for rough water, in currents and rapids, it is necessary to stop up each end with a sort of vegetable wax drawn from trees much as we get pitch from pine. This wax hardens and thus closes the ends.

There were many things to learn before we were quite comfortable. We had learned how to keep our food, how to have the Indians hunt and cut wood for us, which was all the work they did. For this they were paid the equivalent of $10 a month each, and clothing and lodging. They wouldn't mine — at least there are few Indians who will mine. They would rather have an old red flannel shirt than a peck of diamonds.

We learned about keeping iron in the drinking water and we put tin grease cups on all of the supporting poles of our logie, and of all buildings and shelters, to keep out the stinging ants and other insects.

These insects were decidedly troublesome

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and we had to keep constant watch of ourselves to prevent serious trouble with them. There is an especially large mosquito which not only stings fearfully but deposits larvae beneath the skin. It is almost impossible to notice this at the time but it soon becomes a live worm in there, and then a great sore breaks out, caused by the bug so that he can crawl out and grow into a mosquito and sting someone else, and start another bug, and so on.

Worse than this were the "nail beetles." These chaps bore beneath the finger nails and toe nails. They do this boring so cleverly that frequently one does not feel it at all. They, too, deposit larvae, and the result is extremely dangerous as great sores come up beneath the nails and one is likely to lose not only the nail, but the finger or toe from blood poisoning, if even worse effects from the poisoning do not set in.

We used a ten per cent solution of carbolic acid as a preventive. Constant watchfulness was the price of freedom from becoming nesting places for 'skeeters and bugs.

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If we had food in kettles we had to set the legs in cups of oil to keep out the bugs.

Not far from where our mine is located is the property of the late Major John Purroy Mitchel, former mayor of New York City and later an aviator, who was killed while in training at a Southern aviation field. He knew this country well and had had many adventures down through here where he had considerable success in mining diamonds.

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CHAPTER XXI

THE FIRST DIAMOND!

OF course, once landed at the site of our diamond mine, we had to have a comfortable, permanent home. A "logie" it is called here, doubtless a corruption of the Italian "loggia" which has as its equivalent in English the word "lodge." Strictly speaking, a logie is a building that is partly open at the sides and consists of more veranda than closed in room. Ours we had built so that it could be closed in, but except in driving rains the sides were always open. We could screen them to keep out mosquitoes and keep quite comfortable.

We selected a site that was a little back from the river, out of the dampness, on a high and dry sloping hillside. We made a little clearing, but with the forest all about three sides to protect us from high winds. Instead of driving foundation posts we cut the trees

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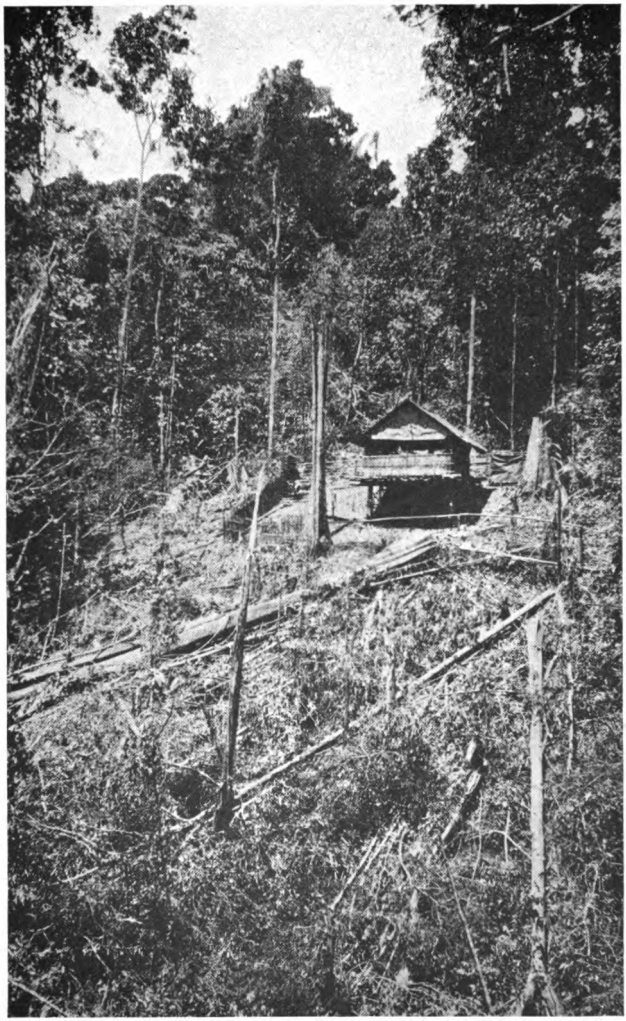

OUR JUNGLE HOME

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and used the stumps where possible. This slope left a sort of basement where we could store such things as rain might injure but insects could not.

We did not trust to palms and reeds for roofing but brought tarred roofing paper with us. This was much better, storm-proof, and helped keep insects away as they are never fond of tar. Facing the river we had a wide veranda. Inside we made good but crude tables and chairs, a desk, and strong supports for our hammocks. The rear end was but a step from the ground, but the front end was some fifteen feet up. It made us a snug and comfortable home for the more than four months we were digging into the gravel of the river banks for "shiners."

Meanwhile we got busy with our mining. Jimmy acted as our cook and personal servant. The captain was an expert in this river life, the Indians were chopping wood and bringing in game and fish, the blacks were busy now getting the mine started and later in digging, so that we were a very busy and quite contented colony.

Diamond mining on the Mazaruni is not

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unlike gold dust mining. The diamonds, like the gold, being the heaviest substance in the gravel, naturally settle down to the bottom when a sieve is twisted about so as to make the water move around and around. The centrifugal force sends the heavy material to the bottom.

We started in with pick and shovel. Later we built a "Long Tom," which is a wooden trough through which water runs, there being several compartments and cleats. The gravel is put in at the upper end and carried down by the rush of water. The gravel, being lighter, is carried on down and off, the diamonds are mixed in with tin ore, pulsite and ordinary quartz, all of these being heavy.

Finally the residue, after the gravel is washed out, is put in a sieve and either "jigged" by hand or by means of wire supports, over a box of water.

The soil was made up of loose gravel and also of conglomerate, not quite solid, yet not loose like gravel, and much muscle with the picks was needed to loosen the stuff.

Once our sieves were ready we could scarcely wait to get busy. Gravel was shov-

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eled into the first sieve and one of the blacks, an expert "jigger," took it up and started the peculiar circular motion.

"Lucky baby," he said. The men who do this work are called "jiggers" and they call the sieves "baby."

We watched his every move. Around and around the sieve went. He paused. We stretched our necks to see but he merely scooped off the lighter top gravel that his circular motion had forced up, then continued.

Over and over he repeated this, for about an hour, continually washing it, the water dripping through the fine mesh of the sieve. Then it was ready. With a final "swish" of the sieve and another washing, with the last handful of gravel brushed off, the contents, just a few handfuls of material, were dumped on a crude table and spread out with a sweep of the hand.

"Here's one!"

It looked bright enough, but Lewis, who had been prospecting there and had seen them mine diamonds, had learned the difference between the dull sparkle of ordinary quartz

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and the brilliant sheen of diamonds; he took up the particle, pressed it between two knife blades and crushed it.

"Everything here except diamonds can be crushed by that sort of pressure," he said.

"Here's one!" I picked it out. It would not crush.

"Yes. That's a diamond. About half a carat," said Lewis.

I have that tiny glittering pebble now and hope to always keep it. The first diamond from our mine! We found a few more in that lot, none very large, but all of them of value. None are too small, in fact, to be of some value. We find them in various colors, pure white, which is the average sort; brilliant blue white, the most valuable and rare; pink or rose, also quite valuable; and yellow, not so valuable. Also a few green and black. Most of the stones we get down there are too small for jewelry, and are used in commerce. Drills are made of them and machinery for boring, and for probably a hundred different uses in manufacture.

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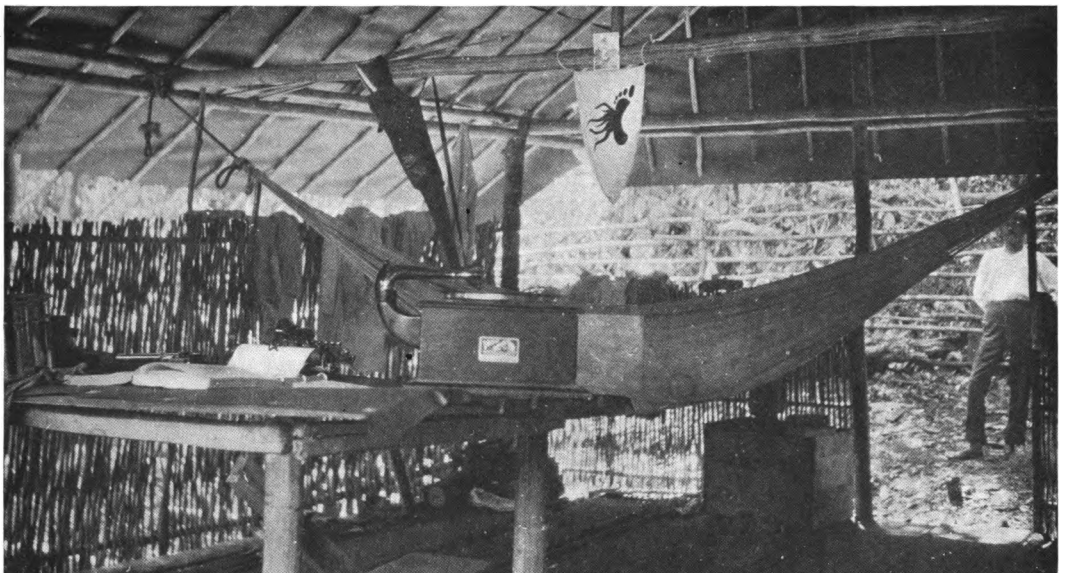

AN INTERIOR VIEW OF OUR "LOGIE"

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CHAPTER XXII

HOW THE PRECIOUS STONES ARE FOUND

THEN we settled down to steady mining. We built a shed for our tools, and we got the hand pump out, we prepared sieves for jigging and we made "Long Toms" and swinging sieves, washing troughs and all the necessary apparatus.

If you had happened to come across our outfit it would have seemed very crude to you. Rough washing boxes, rough troughs through which we turned water, shapeless holes in the ground partly filled with water, great heaps of worthless gravel, the dismal sucking sound of the old hand pump, and a clutter of boards, pans, shovels, and picks.

Yet we had one of the few good mines down there. The "pork knockers" have no mines; they journey from place to place up

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and down the river with pick and shovel and sieve, with a small quantity of food on their backs, and make shelter wherever they happen to be. They generally borrow money for the outfit, river traders bring up food and gin — I am sorry to say that it is generally more gin than food — and these pork knockers, niggers for the most part, exchange their few diamonds for the strong drink and food and keep on. They generally come out at the end of the dry season with enough, or about enough, to square their debts and leave a little over to live on until next season when they borrow again and once more set out.

They have to give a certain percentage of their diamonds to the British Government for the privilege of mining. We had to pay $25 for every 250 carats, which was not excessive at all, when you figure that 250 carats of diamond are worth around $2,000 these days.

We sunk a shaft sixty feet, which was remarkable in that locality as the gravel is loose and washes in with rains. We propped it up with planks but had to keep constant watch of it. Finally water seeped through faster than our hand pump could get it out.

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A LONG TOM DIAMOND WASHER

JIGGERS SEPARATING DIAMONDS
FROM GRAVEL

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Some of the jiggers are so expert that, impossible as it seems, they can jig a baby — to use their own expression — so that the diamonds, heavy as they are, will actually come to the top. They then pick off the biggest ones and then go on jigging as usual. But they do not get away with many. A close watch is kept on the jiggers and if they are caught stealing they are fined a month's pay or more. We had some trouble but not much. These men are bound out to us by the British Government and must work. If they run away they are outcasts and cannot get more work to do. On the other hand we must feed them according to the law and work them only so many hours.

One day we were watching the results of a jigging from the "Long Tom" and suddenly there sparkled before us a large, brilliant stone.

It weighed more than seven carats!

This was the largest stone we found. But all together we cleaned up, in only a few months of actual mining, more than $20,000 worth of diamonds!

Rough diamonds are mostly of odd shapes.

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Seldom do you find them in the almost perfect form that we find quartz crystals. Once in a while I have picked out a small diamond that looked as though it had come directly from a skilled lapidary, so perfect in form it seemed to be.

The largest diamond known to have been found in these fields weighed fourteen carats. A pork knocker named "London" found it. He was a giant of a black man, noted for his lawlessness, and greatly feared. He was working for another man at the time and, strange to say, he turned it over. The reason was that he knew he could not sell so large a gem without being caught.

There is also much gold in that region, but we did not go after it. Having come for diamonds, and finding them in paying quantities, we stuck to it.

Day after day Lewis took his eight or ten grains of quinine. Day after day I seemed to get along without it and I feared to take too much. The mosquitoes were there in plenty, the sort whose sting gives one the jungle fever, so deadly to white men, just as, at home, they cause malarial fevers.

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CHAPTER XXIII

GOOD-BYE TO THE JUNGLE

I WAS in excellent health. There seemed no danger at all and I believed that I could stay there three or four months longer. It is a great game, full of fascination. You get a few diamonds to-day. Next day less, next day more, next day scarcely any, next day a big one, and so on. Always it is "To-morrow we may get a ten carat stone," or "To-morrow we may pull a fistful out of one 'baby,'" and so the temptation is great to stay on and on. At the rate that we were gathering in diamonds it seemed that we ought to pile up about $50,000 in six months. But after we had been actually mining more than four months I was returning from a hunting trip. I had a great burden of deer meat on my back. I walked through bogs where it was almost impossible to pull my feet

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out of the mud. I was hungry and extremely tired.

Now that is just when the white man succumbs to the bite of the mosquito down there. One nailed me on the back of the hand but I thought nothing of it.

But next morning I hated to get up. I had no strength. I became worse during the day and for several days lay in a sort of semi-stupor, weak and listless.

"Very bad," said Captain Peter; "get him back before he dies!"

Poor Lewis broke camp in record time. They bundled me into the boat and I was conscious only a small part of the time.

Going downriver is far different from coming up. They made the trip to Georgetown in a few days and when they got me to the hospital the doctors looked me over and demanded a deposit of $85.

"Why?" demanded Lewis, quite indignant.

"To cover funeral expenses. He can't live," they said.

But I fooled them and recovered rapidly.

Lewis and I still own that mine. We came out with a good little pot of money, clean

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profit. The war took all of the time of both of us — but now that it's over we are planning to go back there some day.

With our experience we feel sure that we can make much money, both in gold and diamond mining. We shall take back better equipment, power pumps, and everything this experience taught us we should have.

My adventure was satisfactory in every way. I wish I could have stuck it out six months longer. But I think the best plan would be for white men to set up their mines and work them about five months, go back home for seven months, work them another five months, and so on, thus avoiding the great dangers.

I am looking forward to the day when I can get back there, meet my Indian friends, go tapir and labba hunting with them and, above all, enjoy the wonderful thrill that comes when you spread out the residue of a jigging and pick out, here and there, a sparkling diamond!

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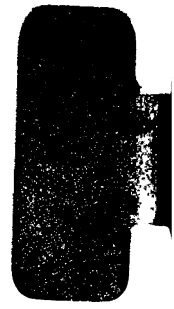

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